Portraits and Criticisms

Peter E. Wright

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PORTRAITS AND CRITICISMS

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PORTRAITS AND CRITICISMS

[British Politicians]

BY

PETER E. WRIGHT
AUTHOR OF "AT THE SUPREME WAR COUNCIL"

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PREFACE

PORTIONS of this book have appeared in the *Daily Mail*, the *Evening Standard*, the *Sunday Chronicle*, and the *Empire Review*. I am obliged to the proprietors of these papers for their leave to reprint them.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE EARL OF OXFORD AND ASQUITH

PORTRAITS & CRITICISMS

MR ASQUITH AND THE WAR

STATESMEN in the past rarely wrote books; at present the practice is becoming universal. But a book is inconveniently revealing, just as a picture is or any other work of art. The ordinary onlooker may only see the subject of the picture, but to another painter it discloses more of the artist than he wished to tell, or possibly than he himself knew about himself. A book discloses the same to those whose use of language is a little more professional than that of the ordinary reader. It is, therefore, a most hazardous enterprise for the great to write; they thus tear away the august mystery that hedges round acts of State. These acts are in themselves so impressive that most people readily attribute greatness to those who perform them. So statesmen require nothing more to sustain their reputation than moderate reticence. The less they say the greater they can be thought. In conversation and speech such prudent discretion can to a great extent be practised, for they are short, and in them a man may be laconic. But a book is too prolonged and profound an effort of expression to be anything but really expressive. Over such a long stretch no cunning or dexterity

can conceal or falsify the real features of the author. Such literary enterprises should, therefore, be undertaken with caution by those who wish to sway their fellow-men, for in its course the splendid mask given to them by birth or position or chance or partisan prejudice must drop and their real face appear. Lord Kitchener may not have been altogether great, but he was infinitely shrewd, and very exactly aware of his own limitations. In his early period he had written a book: he spent the rest of his life buying up the copies and destroying them. He knew that for each word he had written a ray of his glorious halo would fall off. Reputed greatness, like reputed beauty, incurs considerable risk by unveiling itself too entirely; but a book tears away every spiritual covering, whether the author intends it or not.

Mr Asquith is now threescore years and ten. For three decades he has been in the very centre of the political stage, and for one of them he was Prime Minister, and as such he led us into the greatest war in our history. He entered politics equipped with the most intense liberal culture that this country can give, and such as no Prime Minister, not even Mr Gladstone, ever received, and so the events of his life must for him have had an interest and a meaning they never could have for a mere man of business or wealth or birth. Towards the very end of his career, when threescore years and ten, he has given us a book on public affairs. Whatever topic he chose, something superlative might be expected, where the quintessence of political wisdom would be found distilled in a precious and memorable

form; something classical in its profundity and style; some possession for ever. And of all the subjects open to him he chose the origin of the Great War, a theme in itself so dramatic that it would have heightened and coloured the plainest account from the most immature and unexercised pen. Many of the chief actors in this drama have told their story, but none of them ever had a chance of telling it so well as Mr Asquith. Yet none has ever told it worse. Books on all subjects have been produced by English politicians during the last few years, but none has ever been at such a low literary level as "The Genesis of the War."[1] Yet it is the most precious of all, for, whether he intended to paint it or not, the man who was ruling us when we plunged into the war has presented us with a portrait of himself by himself in his last phase. However small the literary merit of this book may be, its historical value is very great.

In this work Mr Asquith displays a singular quality, in itself not sufficient to make him a great man, but far more useful to a statesman in this country than any greatness would be; he never departs from the tone of good nature. In the whole book there is no hard word about anybody. None of his former colleagues does he ever touch with the faintest breath of censure. Yet many of them, who owed their political existence to his favour, deserted him in the hour of adversity, or helped to dispossess him, and their conduct during the period immediately preceding the war might legitimately have

1 "The Genesis of the War," by the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith (Cassell & Co.).

received some strictures. But he passes none, and where he can he praises them. If he mentions his adversaries at home, no acrimony or even reproach can be detected in what he says, and even when he feels forced into criticism, as of Sazonoff and the German Emperor, he cannot be called severe. Such generosity deserves, and has on every side received, admiration and applause. It is a quality we value much, and in practical affairs its power is great, and it accounts for a great deal of Mr Asquith's success; for the happy skill with which he made divergent members of a Cabinet pull together; for the ascendancy he preserved in his party long after his conduct of the war had failed; for the strong attachment felt for him by officials and minor personages of the political stage, who do not always receive such consideration from their taskmasters. If in itself it was not sufficient to raise him to his exalted position, it was sufficient in ordinary times to keep him there, however much his powers might decay, and to perpetuate his long reign. For the ship he governed was stout, and sped on its course so strongly that in fine weather it needed but little steering. Unfortunately for Mr Asquith it ran into one of the greatest storms that ever struck it, when mere decorum of public language was not enough.

The subject of this book is the bursting of that storm. If the subject were any other, or Mr Asquith not one of the prime actors, his own moderation would disarm all criticism; an inferior book is a venial offence, and its kindly spirit might well redeem any literary faults. But such an author, on such a topic, cannot enjoy the indulgence he

himself shows. The perplexed nations are still threatened by war and its horrors, and so false explanations as to the origin of the last cannot be allowed to pass in order to spare politely the feelings of the statesman who, as will be here maintained, was partly responsible for it and very nearly lost it.

This book reveals a deteriorated mind; except for a small legal cunning, that peeps out here and there, it is a very inferior work indeed. Its construction is simple enough. A number of books on the origin of the war have been collected, not by Mr Asquith, but by someone else. Mr Asquith makes extracts from these, chiefly from the worst and most useless, the Kaiser's war book, and over these he lets trickle a feeble commentary of hollow commonplace, just as he does in his present speeches but worse. These disjointed remarks are stuffed out with statistics of naval expansion and irrelevant time-tables, none of which seem to have been prepared by him, and which have no interest whatever.

There is nothing in the whole of this thick volume which adds anything to our previous knowledge except the speeches—and they are not his own—made at the Dominions' Conference before the war, which are here published for the first time, and are most interesting. Mr Asquith sheds not a ray of light on all the great events he treats and all the great people he has met. Though signed by a man who entered the Cabinet nearly a generation ago, and who was Prime Minister for nearly a decade, it might just as well have been put together by a Grub Street hack for some third-

rate publisher. The real case against him Mr Asquith ignores, but sets up instead a very insubstantial one of his own making, and deals it a few weak blows, which are quite superfluous, for it falls down of itself. Yet this chicanery is almost his book's brightest intellectual gleam.

The language of this once eminent scholar and powerful controversialist is worse still. Mr Asquith once had a style; if rather dull, it was massive in a dignified academic way, like those eighteenth century buildings which imitate the classical, though at a great distance, and have a certain frigid majesty. It might be called a St George's Hanover Square style, and it served its purpose well, just as that church does. But here it lies in broken heaps, fallen and crumbled into all the shapeless and colourless jargons learnt by the author in the different phases of his career, academic, legal and administrative. There is not a paragraph, not a phrase worth quoting. When Mr Churchill's bold and breezy English bursts in, it is as if a window had been opened into a stuffy room. It is true that Mr Asquith can still use this verbiage to evade an inconvenient point, and this wiliness is the only glimmer which irradiates utter darkness.

Yet the hand that wrote this book is the same hand that only five years before had been steering the whole State in its hour of extremest peril. Just as the considerate and moderate tone of this book reveals the secret of Mr Asquith's continued influence, so its faults disclose the weakness and indecision that let us run into the war, and would

have let us drift on to the rocks and founder there, had not Mr Asquith ceased to be Prime Minister.

In this book, he floats helplessly, unarmed and rudderless. Yet twenty years ago this vessel carried almost the biggest guns of any of our politicians, and in the fiscal controversies of that time fired, if not the most brilliant, at least the weightiest, best-aimed, and most deadly shots. A strange deterioration has overtaken it since then.

In his tedious and superfluous indictment of the Kaiser, Mr Asquith traces the course of his ambition up to the war, and to do so he draws upon a book written by Karl Kautsky founded upon that extensive and invaluable set of papers which Karl Kautsky himself extracted from the archives of the German Foreign Office after the German Revolution, and which were published in 1919[1] including the Kaiser's own pencilled comments made by him on the margin of State documents. Kautsky's book has been translated,[2] and Mr Asquith uses this translation.

A good deal of Mr Asquith's pompous but empty argument is taken up with refuting the Kaiser's silly charges. But Mr Asquith, by a poor forensic trick, is meeting a different case to the one brought against him. The real accusation, which he ignores, is as follows.

In July 1914, the two sides into which the

[1] The book is called "Wie der Weltkrieg Wirklich Enstand" von Karl Kautsky (Cassirer, Berlin, 1919), hereinafter called *Kautsky in German:* and the documents "Die Deutsche Dokumente Zum Kriegs Ausbruch" (Charlottenburg), hereinafter called the Kautsky documents.

[2] "The guilt of William Hohenzollern," by Karl Kautsky (Skeffington and Son), hereinafter called Kautsky in English.

nations of the Continent were divided began a dispute which was likely to end in a war. They were evenly balanced, and, if England had declared for either side, the other would have given way at once. But England would not make any clear declaration, and excited the Central Powers with the false hope of neutrality, and their adversaries with an uncertain promise of assistance. It was only when the opponents were locked in a furious embrace and could not draw back that our intentions were disclosed. If Germany had foreseen there was even a chance that we would be numbered among her enemies, she would never have persisted in her enterprise or even begun it. This is the charge, and the incomparable Kautsky documents prove it beyond a doubt. To this extent, limited but not small, the responsibility for the war falls on the Liberal statesmen of 1914.

There is hardly any great event in history on which such light has been cast as the genesis of the war, for there is no other occasion in history where a publicist as ruthlessly truthful as Karl Kautsky has been let loose without restraint into the archives of a Foreign Office. The evidence of the documents is conclusive and overwhelming that the leaders of Germany drove on to war only as long and because they counted on our neutrality, and perhaps on our co-operation. Even Kautsky, who hates them as much as any man can, thinks so.[1] As soon as they saw their mistake, they reversed their policy at once, and as violently, but

[1] Kautsky in English, p. 188, "After the 29th they sought to preserve peace."

it was too late; Austria and Russia were by then too far engaged. No threat, no display of England's might was required to stop Germany; a whisper, even a belated whisper, would have been enough.

The course of events in the Kautsky documents is quite clear. The Germans were sure of us. On July 21, when the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia was being prepared, the German Ambassador in St Petersburg reported to Berlin that the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs had intimated to him that "in England the attitude of Austria-Hungary was very much disapproved." The Kaiser wrote in pencil at the side. "He is absolutely wrong."[1] On July 22, the Germans still believed we favoured them, and that Sir Edward Grey "is endeavouring to exert influence in St Petersburg from the Austrian point of view."[2] From July 23 to July 30, Russia, in spite of Austria's acts of war against her ally Serbia, "negotiated in vain and waited,"[3] being constantly rebuffed in Berlin. The German Government were perfectly sure we would be neutral; it had not the faintest doubt.

The Germans never received the slightest hint of what our ultimate action was to be till Wednesday, July 29. Then for the first time during a crisis that had lasted for weeks did they receive any sort of a warning. Sir Edward Grey told Lichnowsky very mildly that "in certain

[1] Kautsky in German, p. 106. "Er Irrt."

[2] Kautsky in English, p. 170.

[3] "Meine Londoner Mission," von Fürst Lichnowsky, p. 30. "Eine ganze Woche vergeblich unterhandelt und gewartet hatte."

circumstances the British Government might find itself forced to take rapid decisions"[1]—nothing more than that. This slight caution was quite enough. As Kautsky says, this news came upon the Kaiser "Like a thunderbolt."[2] As his long and abusive pencil note shows, he became almost insane, or rather as Kautsky says, "he became like a man who has been hit over the head and does not know what he is doing."[3] But what he felt is plain enough; it was that "he had been deceived."[4]

No exertion of England's might had been needed, or even a menace. Only a few mild words that hinted at a possibility of our not remaining out of the conflict was enough to stop Germany. If we remained neutral, Germany stood more than a fair chance of winning; if we came in, her plot became a desperate gamble; none knew it better than the German statesmen.

The telegram from London[5] containing Sir Edward Grey's single and very moderate phrase did not reach Berlin till half-past nine on the evening of Wednesday, July 29. It was deciphered; considered by the Kaiser, on whom it inflicted what was almost an attack of insanity, and by his Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg: their decision to retract was taken: a long dispatch

[1] Kautsky in English, p. 172.

[2] Kautsky in German, p. 113. "Wie ein Donnerschlag."

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 119. "Schlagen den Kaiser den Kopf und rauben ihm von Besinnung."

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 115. "Der gemeine Taüscher." This was the Kaiser's word about Grey.

[5] Kautsky documents, Vol. II, No. 368.

to the German Ambassador in Vienna, Von Tschirschky, was drafted, which repeated Grey's words and instructed Von Tschirschky to insist in Vienna "earnestly and urgently" that Austria should "adopt Grey's plan and accept mediation."[1] This was exactly what Russia had been steadily asking for during the preceding week, and Germany and Austria as steadily refusing. This dispatch was in cipher and sent off at five to three on the morning of Thursday, July 30.[2] It had taken less than five and a half hours for the German Government to alter their entire policy and to strive for peace as vehemently as they had driven towards war.

Thus early on that Thursday morning all the great powers in Europe except Austria-Hungary were agreed. Russia had not yet mobilised. But neither Germany, nor her ally Austria-Hungary, could announce their joint consent after the Russian mobilisation had taken place, or they would have appeared to give way to a threat. Early that morning of Thursday, July 30, therefore, the question of peace or war became a race between Russian mobilisation and the Austro-Hungarian decision. If the mobilisation came first, it was war: if the Austrian consent, peace. It was a question of time. Would Russia, which had waited a whole week to mobilise while her ally Serbia was being attacked, wait any longer? All depended on this. During the whole of Thursday the Kaiser and his Chancellor watched

[1] Kautsky in English, p. 184.
[2] Kautsky documents, Vol. II, No. 395.

this race, and from some pencil notes[1] which must have been made by the Kaiser just before dinner, he seems even at that hour to have had a divided mind; he still thought it was about an even chance.

The Kaiser, with his usual quickness, was right; it was to be a near thing. The dispatch telegraphed to Von Tschirschky from Berlin does not seem to have been deciphered till midday on Thursday, and was at once sent round to him. This was slow work; on a British Military Staff a dispatch of that length would have been ready at breakfast time. Von Tschirschky happened to be lunching[2] with the Austrian Emperor's chief adviser, Count Berchthold, and another Austrian minister, Forgach, and it reached him during the meal. Von Tschirschky was not a brilliant or even a clever man, and the Kaiser never misses an opportunity in his pencil notes of calling him a donkey, but even in his formal, dry account the effect of Sir Edward Grey's words can be detected; few and mild as they were, they reverberated still more thunderously in Vienna than they had in Berlin. If the Kaiser had been maddened, Berchthold was stunned. So unexpected was our action, so dire the possible consequences to his country that he could not grasp the facts till the dispatch had been read over to him twice; he listened, "deadly white and without a word,"[3] to the two successive

[1] Kautsky documents, Vol. II, No. 423. "In hinblick auf die Kolossalen rüssischen Rüstungsmassnahmen ist das alles, fürchte ich, zu spät," and the end "gut."

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 465. "Während ich bei Graf Berchthold frühstückte."

[3] *Ibid.* "Bleich und schweigend."

readings. Then without wasting time on discussion, he hurried away to dress for an immediate interview with the Austrian Emperor.[1] But Forgach, who remained behind, remarked that acceptation of Grey's mediation proposals was imperative.[2] So at lunch time on Thursday, Austria had in effect assented: the Russian mobilisation had not begun. Only the assent of Hungary was wanting to make the European accord complete.

Tisza, the Prime Minister of Hungary, had been the main engineer in the conspiracy against Serbia, and Hungarian troops were already engaged in fighting Serbs; so it was necessary to procure his consent. But from Tschirschky's account there is no reason to think it would have been refused. If Tisza had been in Vienna, he could have been consulted at once. The joint consent of the Central Powers to Grey's proposals should have reached Petrograd late in the afternoon—just in time.

But Tisza was not in Vienna,[3] and was not due back in Vienna till Friday morning; so Tschirschky wired back at once, and no decision could be taken till he arrived. Even at nine that Thursday evening, the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, in Berlin, had not given up all hope, and he again

[1] Kautsky documents, Vol. II, No. 465. "Um sich zur Audienz beim Kaiser umzukleiden."

[2] The same. "Dass er ein Eingehen auf die Vermittelung für geboten halte."

[3] The same. "Morgen früh werde Graf Tisza in Wien erscheinen, dessen Ansicht bei so weitragenden. Entscheidung eingeholt werden müsse."

wired to Vienna urging Austria-Hungary to assent. But it was too late; at eleven he cancelled his nine o'clock telegram. In the interval news had reached Berlin that the Russian mobilisation had been ordered late that afternoon, and war became inevitable.

The Kautsky documents establish, beyond any possibility of doubt, that when the Great Powers of Europe plunged into a conflict that was to go foaming down such cataracts of blood for more than four years, they were in fact perfectly agreed and no point of difference existed between them. If Sir Edward Grey had spoken on Tuesday instead of Wednesday, there would certainly have been no war; if Tisza had been in Vienna on Thursday, there probably would have been no war; if the cipherers at the German Embassy in Vienna had been quicker, there might have been no war. Thus does fate mock us, and our destinies on this earth hang by a thread.

The statesmen of Berlin and Vienna cannot be absolved of responsibility for the war. It was they who started the conflagration, and who were the offenders. But if the incendiaries are guilty, the watchmen who could so easily have extinguished the fire and failed to do so are also responsible, though a smaller blame attaches to them. This minor responsibility falls heavily, absolutely, and exclusively on the Liberal statesmen of this country. So little was needed to stop Germany, but they alone could do it; not even a clenched fist was required; a mere uplifted finger was enough. But the Liberal ministers hesitated for

day after day, swaying this way and that, and for this vacillation Mr Asquith is responsible; for, as the then German Ambassador in London, Prince Lichnowsky, tells us in his book, the final decision always lay with him.[1] To this extent, which is considerable, he is responsible for the war.

His manner of conducting it was like his manner of entering upon it. Mr Asquith was removed from the position of Prime Minister at the end of 1916. His wife had been obliging enough to make a record of the charges brought against him by the press and public opinion.[2] Mr Asquith's words, she says, were quoted as indicating he was a man of "apathy" and "delay."[3] His conduct of the war was denounced as "apathy in high places."[4] And it was said that in the first two years of the war he was "too slack ever to win it."[5] But his colleagues in the Cabinet, both Conservative and Labour and many of the Liberal, must have shared this view. For, as she is obliging enough to tell us,[6] in December 1916 they did what no British Cabinet has ever done to any Prime Minister; they told him to go. And in this eviction the lifelong friend of Mrs Asquith and her husband, Lord Balfour,[7] took the lead. These colleagues were in a position to know; they neither would nor could have acted as they

[1] "Meine Londoner Mission," p. 25. "Wenn wichtigen Fragen vorlagen, denn war natürlich die letzte Entscheidung bei ihm."

[2] In her book, "The Autobiography of Margot Asquith" (Thornton Butterworth) hereinafter called the Asquith Autobiography.

[3] Asquith Autobiography, Vol. II, p. 220.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 249.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 246.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 247.

did, unless they had considered he was far too feeble to conduct the war. It may, therefore, be concluded that he was in fact too weak to do so.

But besides the general view of the public and the more instructed opinion of his colleagues, there has been a semi-judicial inquiry into a special section of his war administration for a limited period — the inquiry of the Dardanelles Commission. This body investigated the conduct of the war at Gallipoli over a short period of 1915. It was a by no means partisan Commission and its inquiries were exhaustive. There exists no reason for thinking that this specimen of Mr Asquith's war administration was different from the whole of it. It is infinitely more probable that it was typical rather than exceptional. There is no justification for treating it otherwise.

At the beginning of 1915 neither the War Office nor the Admiralty, for a variety of reasons, had a Staff. The general direction of the Gallipoli expedition was entrusted by the Cabinet to a small Council called the War Council of which Mr Asquith was Chairman.[1] It requires nothing more than common sense to assert that this body, entrusted in effect with the conduct of these operations, and consisting partly of military and naval experts, ought to have followed the course of events with the closest attention; that it should have met often; and that it should have given prompt decisions on all questions of importance that arose.

[1] See the Report of the Dardanelles Commission.

On March 19, 1915, the naval attack on the Straits had failed and come to an end; and soon after began a famous series of operations on land, unsuccessful in the event, but made illustrious by the desperate valour of our troops. At every step in those vain and sanguinary attacks the question arose whether more lives should be staked in further attacks, or the whole enterprise abandoned.

There is no fair way of judging Mr Asquith's conduct of the war, except by his Chairmanship of this War Council; for it is the only portion of his war administration that has been impartially and judicially investigated. We are thus bound by our conclusion on this portion of it: our general view must follow this particular decision. For no other means are at present in existence of fairly judging his war administration as a whole.

The whole fiery youth of our Empire had embarked on the Gallipoli Armada, and landed on those fatal beaches. Such heroism was shown by them; such dreadful sufferings were endured; such undeserved failure dogged their efforts, that it would not be thought possible that anyone in England who could in any way assist them should fail to do so: and no one could do more to help them than Mr Asquith, for he was Chairman of the War Council which was conducting these operations. But all those considerations failed to touch Mr Asquith. During the most critical period of the land attack, and for a period of eight weeks, between March 19 and May 14, this War Council never met at all: and it never met because Mr Asquith did not convene it. Such

are the findings of the Commission, which directly censured him in these words.

"The Prime Minister ought to have summoned a meeting of the War Council."

There can be no reason to suppose that this behaviour was exceptional; yet anyone who could remain supine and inactive on such an occasion, and at such a call, could never be alert and active on other occasions. The common charge against him (as recorded by Mrs Asquith) of apathy, is not, therefore, sufficiently strong. To remain so motionless he must have been overcome by a sort of lethargy: and there can be little doubt that it was this opinion of his conduct that prompted nearly all his colleagues, even his oldest friends, to unite and turn him out in December 1916.

In all these phases of the war: whether vacillating and procrastinating at innumerable and interminable Cabinet Meetings on the eve of it; whether sunk in too great inertia even to discuss the subject of operations while we were dying in thousands in Gallipoli; whether so inactive that even his colleagues in the Cabinet revolted against him; he appears always the same as in his book—a character and a mind utterly inferior to its former self.

The very protestations of his wife[1] and supporters, that he is still jumping with electrical vitality, provoke a doubt; for one can protest too much. Various announcements have during the last few years continued to appear in the press, from which the natural deduction is that an ex-

[1] See her Articles in the London Magazine.

uberant energy continues to animate, and even agitate, him; and, in case we happen to be too indolent or too simple to understand, other inspired and tolerably expensive paragraphs have always followed in rapid and extensive train which helped us to draw the desired conclusion.

For example, a visit by his family to Italy at Easter in 1924 hardly seemed a matter of national importance: yet this very ordinary event was proclaimed to the world, at so much per word, in a very great number of important publications. The innocent readers of them might almost think that Mrs Asquith's arrival in Rome was as decisive for mankind as the entry of Alaric or Charlemagne, or even the foundation of the City itself; that, marking as it did the beginning of an era, the calendar itself would undergo an appropriate reformation; and that the Romans would begin to calculate the date of the year from her appearance within their walls in the company of her already famous son, whose luncheon parties likewise re-echo in the press at what cannot be much less than a guinea a line. But in case the import of this expedition might be misunderstood, further notices, hardly less numerous than the sequence usually devoted to the opening of the Royal Academy, at once informed us that this journey could not have taken place unless Mr Asquith was so overflowing with boundless health that he could, for a time, dispense even with the comfort and solace of his wife's society.

To fortify this public conviction, Mr Asquith's guests in the country, during the trying period of

Mrs Asquith's absence, were made known with a publicity rather more lavish than is usually expended on the cast of a new play. It was a most distinguished list; but the society of some, even for so short a period as an Easter Holiday, could certainly not be endured except by a person in the full strength of a green and vigorous old age. No doubt this was the idea (very useful to Mr Asquith but hardly flattering to them) which these announcements were intended to ingeminate. Not only were we intended to think that Mr Asquith down in Oxfordshire was leaping as high as Grandpa does in the advertisement of Kruschen salts, but we could observe that his "supreme fitness and willingness," too, was being celebrated by a publicity campaign hardly less extensive, resonant, and costly. He must like Grandpa have been taking "a little daily dose" of something hardly less effective than "the continuous supply of potassium, magnesium and sodium" afforded by the famous medicine. He ought not to have kept this a secret. What was it that he absorbed to keep him, in the language of his only rival's advertisements, "always ready to seize a chance of success and turn it into a golden reality"?

While the Liberal tribes in the country have, even during these last few years, remained faithful and believing, incredulity on this very point and something approaching to disloyalty seem to have prevailed in the inner courts at Westminster. The Liberal Members of the last Parliament were certainly dissatisfied with Mr Asquith as an object of political worship, and loud murmurs were audible.

As usual, it was in the shrine itself that trouble arose for the idol; there, unluckily, he could be heard and seen in person, while outside the precincts of the temple nothing was known of him but what his attendants wished to be known. So far from treating Mr Asquith as a radiating centre of party energy, the Liberals inside the House almost told him he was supine, ineffective, and almost immobile. To convey this, if not in actual words, at least in a fashion that was unmistakable, they held a succession of party meetings. Their action may be taken as a surer guide to the truth than an ingenious propaganda that would not have been necessary, or existed at all, if the inconvenient truth had not been there in all its unpleasant nakedness, requiring to be muffled up, veiled, and hidden away as much as possible. Not content with meeting on a single occasion to rouse him, they resolved to come together regularly, and give him further shocks every fortnight.

His electors, too, do not have to judge of him by hearsay. Hence, no doubt, the rejection of him by successive constituencies, who the more they know him the less they want him as their representative, though electors are usually proud to have as their member the leader of a great historic party, a former Prime Minister and a possible future one. It is the case that for most men politics have been turned by party prejudice into a branch of mythology; the journalists of Fleet Street are compelled by necessity to transform party leaders into mythical creatures for partisans who cannot know them, and who would only be annoyed if they

were told these celebrities were usually only men, and sometimes less than men. But Mr Asquith's constituents, like his followers in the House, cannot entertain these official illusions about him ; they also see him and know him, and his own appearance contradicts only too emphatically the authorised version of himself. He would long ago have drifted like a hulk into the backwater of an Oxford Common Room, and stuck there, had he not been tugged back into the mid-stream of politics by the itching ambition of his wife and the bright polished skill of a daughter, Lady Bonham Carter, who inherits his talents without his weaknesses.

The official Mr Asquith is the Mr Asquith of middle life, the dour and doughty political gladiator, refined and sharpened by Balliol, and tempered and hardened at the Bar. The real Mr Asquith of the war was a shadow of his former self. He was a mere frontage, still imposing enough, but behind all was crumbled, and there existed in him neither the foresight to anticipate events, nor the will to mould them. So he appears in this book, and so he was during the war. Years are not enough to have made such a change and there must have been some deep-seated, powerful, sapping agency at work to bring about such a profound alteration.

THE COUNTESS OF OXFORD AND ASQUITH

MRS ASQUITH AND HER TIMES

Mrs Asquith, in this second volume of her autobiography,[1] "gives up," in her own words, "balls and parties and throws herself into domestic life." From notes made at the time for future reference she finds that she, on her marriage had resolved "to dedicate herself to her children." This renunciation of the world took effect as soon as her first child saw the light; for, she tells us, "Lady Harcourt came to see my baby the day after she was born, and Lord Rosebery, Arthur Balfour, Milner, George Curzon, and Randall Davidson came when I was allowed to lie on the sofa."

But she has been more unfortunate, or more careless, with her account of her married life than with the story of her girlhood, previously published. In this earlier volume, and in various periodicals, the public had learnt from herself the destructive effect of her youthful beauty; hers, it appears, had been a face which in a more heroic age would also have launched a thousand ships, like Helen's; for she not only had received the homage of immediate passion from numberless men, too inconspicuous to be named, but (so she disclosed to a surprised world) some of the most renowned charmers of the

[1] "The Autobiography of Margot Asquith," Vol. II (Thornton Butterworth, Limited).

previous generation, like Harry Cust, had been deeply infatuated with her; uselessly, of course, for her virtue had been not less unique than her loveliness.

No one had ever suspected this inflammatory power, and the information created some curiosity to hear the romantic story from the victims themselves, as well as from this retired enchantress. But not one of them was alive; perhaps they had succumbed to the pangs inflicted by the shafts of her maiden beauty. At any rate, they were all dead when her book appeared. Yet it would have been interesting to hear from Harry Cust, in whatever Elysian fields he charms the dead as he did the living, an account from his own lips of how he came to reject the adoration of the fairest women of his time for the young lady whose photographs she herself supplies.

But with this second volume she was more unlucky, while it was appearing in a Sunday paper, than she had been with the first. In it she tells an anecdote about the "great South African millionaire, Robinson." This anecdote, like all her anecdotes, put her in a highly favourable light; associating with millionaires, yet superior to them by virtue of her finer culture; condescending to men of humble origin, but mindful of her own greater advantages. Robinson, however (and apologies are here offered to him for referring to him, as Mrs Asquith does, as if he were a footman, and without any prefix of politeness), was still alive.

He was incensed by having attributed to him a

piece of vulgar arrogance, such as might be expected from Mrs Asquith and her friends, but in itself very improbable when placed in the mouth of any man of business: for it was alleged that on taking an unknown lady down to dinner, one of the first questions he asked her was: "Are you rich?" He at once wrote to the Press and declared the story to be false.

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This sort of veracity hangs heavily about the whole book, and more especially about the so-called Diary on which it is founded, where Mrs Asquith appears endowed with a singular gift of prophecy, detecting more than twenty years ago hideous faults in all who opposed her husband at the time of writing the book and golden qualities in his then supporters. With a great deal of astuteness, but little art, she has painted a portrait of herself, very captivating to the British matron, who is her best customer—a Mrs Asquith, serious, religious, and domestic, absorbed in the duties of life and scorning its vanities and pleasures. But the paint peels off at once. This is regrettable; for Mrs Asquith, if she had only been sincere, might have given us something that would have interested even if it had shocked us.

There is the same limitless effrontery in this as in her earlier writings, the same disclosure and sale of private conversations, letters, and friendships. Indeed, she has proclaimed her intention of continuing to turn the personalities of her existence into coin, till a provision is made for her husband as ex-Prime Minister sufficient to satisfy her scale

of expenditure. It has not yet occurred to her that want of money does not justify the betrayal of the privacies of life, privacies which would be quite tedious if they did not concern the Prime Minister of England. In this volume, however, her lucrative frankness takes another turn. It is less domestic. For example, we hear no more of "God's own," a description used by her to indicate the circle of sycophants who fawned on her in Downing Street and who were thoroughly exploited by her in return. There is less about her household and more about the State; this is to be regretted, for she had raised great expectations as to what she would say or do next. An amused public has already learnt that her daughters-in-law were virtuous, a certificate of character for which they are not likely to be grateful if they are women of ordinary delicacy, as no doubt they are; and also that her husband had stern views on the temperance question, with secret leanings to Prohibition. The world had seen so much and such strange things as she turned her public somersaults that it sat gaping and wondering what it would see next.

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A substantial and permanent addition to the gaiety of nations could justly be anticipated from her. But she has taken a different turn. Again there are a few bedroom scenes, but they are neither scabrous nor entertaining. Now she turns to politics and, quite involuntarily, throws considerable light on the events in which her husband

played so great a part. For the truth will out even in an autobiography.

We know, from such evidence as that supplied by the Dardanelles Commission, of the sluggish inactivity of Mr Asquith, when thousands were dying in Gallipoli. We learn from this volume the complement of this fact, that his wife, self-confident, restless, and futile, profited by his apathy to take his place. She appears constantly interfering, by letter and act, in every department of politics. So complete is the usurpation that his official and her private correspondence become indistinguishable, and she produces Lord Morley's letter of resignation to Mr Asquith in 1914 as one of her own letters, without considering the deduction that must be necessarily drawn from this confusion. This is the general impression she herself gives.

On particular matters she is still more instructive. Her evidence on one point fits in so exactly with the evidence given by the German Ambassador, Prince Lichnowsky, in his famous pamphlet,[1] and by the American Ambassador, Dr Page, in his published letters, that one conclusion must almost be taken as an established fact. How were Mr Asquith and Lord Grey blinded in 1914 by Lichnowsky, so that Germany's intention to fight, evident to an observer like Page, who was hardly a diplomat at all, remained invisible to these two professional statesmen? This volume comes to make the answer certain. Lichnowsky played on the vanity of Mrs Asquith and used her to

[1] "Meine Londoner Mission," already referred to.

deceive her husband and to mislead the solemn but docile Grey.

On one or two other points she is not less illuminating. Hardly anyone can doubt, after reading her account of the Maurice letter in May 1918, that its publication was part of a cabal in which Mr Asquith, the Leader of the Opposition, combined with Sir William Robertson, General Maurice, and the discontented Conservatives to overthrow Mr Lloyd George, as they had done in February, when the attempt had ended in the prosecution of a well-known London Conservative daily. But most interesting of all is the story of Mr Asquith's fall at the end of 1916. The real reason of his overthrow emerges, quite against Mrs Asquith's intention as anyone can find out by reading carefully.

Whatever demerits may ultimately be set down to their account, we owe a debt which we can never estimate to the late Lord Northcliffe and Mr Lloyd George for having intervened and combined in that critical and dreadful hour to drag from the seat of authority, not only the feeble and inert Mr Asquith, but also, as she herself makes manifest, for having at the same moment deposed and rid us of this meddling wife.

MR BALDWIN

MR BALDWIN AND HIS 1923 MINISTRY

Mr Baldwin came to the throne by a palace revolution, because a party within the Conservative party, the Diehards, had deposed the reigning leaders at the end of 1922. The Diehards were a body of polite and amiable English gentlemen, with rooted and inflexible ideas, and numbering not more than 60 or 70. Their spokesman in the House of Commons, Colonel Gretton, was a man of great and deserved wealth, for he supplies to the world the delicious liquor known as Bass. But even he spoke very badly, if indeed it could be called speaking at all; burying his face in a bundle of notes, he read them out in an unmelodious and almost inaudible voice to an inattentive house. Such a band and such a chief hardly had the air of conspirators, or seemed likely to wade through slaughter to a throne. Nor did they do so; they carried out a revolution without meaning to, and seized supreme power without knowing they were engaged in such a bold and decisive enterprise.

Every party leader has an assistant in whom he must place entire confidence, his Chief Whip; he is the leader's eye, through whom he observes his followers, and his right hand, through whom he executes his purposes. If the Chief Whip feels

that he cannot adhere to the policy of his leader, it is his duty to resign; if he keeps his place and yet opposes his chief, he is in effect betraying him, whether he means to or not, for it is on him, more than on any other man, that the party leader relies to carry out his policy; otherwise he would not keep him as Chief Whip.

At the end of 1922 the leader of the Conservatives was Mr Austen Chamberlain; he and the party were supporting Mr Lloyd George as Prime Minister. Mr Chamberlain's Chief Whip was Sir Leslie Wilson.

Sir Leslie's political talents were comprised in his smile. At least he had never displayed any other to an attentive world. Particularly glittering, this facial function had always been under perfect control, shining on those he required and switching off from those he did not. In course of time its action had even become reflex and self-regulating, and with exquisite precision adjusted its degree of warmth to the degree of utility any person might have for Sir Leslie. His smile was his fortune. Operating it with judicious care and not inconsiderable industry, Sir Leslie had become Chief Whip to Mr Austen Chamberlain, who, like all men of perfect integrity, assumed that others were as loyal as himself.

At the end of 1922 the Diehard section of the Conservatives were grumbling at the continuance of a Coalition with Liberals, and demanding that Mr Lloyd George and his Liberal group should be abandoned. Mr Chamberlain, Lord Birkenhead, and other Conservative leaders therefore called a

meeting of the party at the Carlton Club and submitted the continuance of this policy to a vote of the whole party. At this meeting the Diehards made their criticisms heard; and their discontent was at that moment being justified by the course of events abroad, where the policy of Mr Lloyd George was proving disastrous. The mass of the Conservatives hesitated and wavered, but with their usual common sense determined that, whichever way they might pull, they would at all costs pull together. By force of habit they turned to their bell-wether, the Chief Whip, to find out from him, who alone could know, which way the majority of the party desired to go.

An official report of the meeting was issued by the Central Unionist offices.[1] In it Sir Leslie is reported as having opposed the policy recommended by his own leader, Mr Austen Chamberlain, who has always and steadily refused to refer to his conduct. Lord Birkenhead, however, was less reticent. In a public statement issued to the Press,[2] he told him "his conduct" had "been lacking in straightforwardness throughout," and when Sir Leslie soon after stood for re-election, Lord Birkenhead advised his constituents to vote for his opponent, who, he said, "had never abandoned a leader."[3]

[1] See the *Times*, October 22, 1922, p. 8.

[2] See the *Times*, November 1, 1922, p. 12, for Lord Birkenhead's account of the transaction.

[3] The *Times*, November 18, 1922. Late edition. Lord Birkenhead writes to Mr J. M. Erskine, the independent Conservative candidate for St George's, Westminster—"Although I do not agree with all your views, I strongly advise my neighbours and friends to vote for you. You, at least, have neither fled from a constituency nor abandoned a leader."

It was said that before the meeting Sir Leslie had let Mr Chamberlain understand[1] that both he himself and a majority of the party favoured a continuance of the coalition, and that Mr Chamberlain had relied upon this information when he proposed this very policy to his party. Whether Sir Leslie did or not, it was the speech of the Chief Whip at a critical moment, when the utmost exertions of his loyalty were due, which turned the scale against his own leader.

Small events can bring on the greatest consequences. Sir Leslie's speech brought down Mr Chamberlain, whom everything united to make the Leader of the Conservatives, and he in his fall pulled after him Mr Lloyd George, who had so long bestridden our politics like a colossus, and who had been the foremost leader in that grand alliance which had won the greatest of all wars. So, in the autumn of 1922, the Diehards found that they had carried out an unintentional revolution, and were the involuntary masters of the crown and the sceptre. They had no one of their own capable of bearing so heavy a burden; the first and best donee, Mr Bonar Law, expired under its weight. On his retirement in the summer of 1923, they bestowed it on Mr Baldwin, a very popular but till then inconspicuous minister and member.

His accession was hailed with joy by the whole nation. For in its politics, as well as in its popular fiction, the national ideal was the strong, silent man. Mr Baldwin had almost been silent; and,

[1] This is Lord Birkenhead's view, as expressed in the published statement appearing in the *Times* of November 1, 1922.

if his voice was not unheard in the House itself it had certainly not re-echoed in the great world beyond. He might, therefore, be strong. This was the popular expectation.

Mr Baldwin shared this as well as most of the tastes of his fellow countrymen. He was no sooner Prime Minister than he began protesting that he was a man of few words, and soon he was devoting speech after speech, and none of them very short, to establishing this point alone; then, as he warmed to the inspiring theme, his fluency became torrential and was nearly always directed to this fascinating subject. By the end of the summer he had to his account an output of rhetoric such as few of his predecessors could approach. Even Gladstone himself, in the utmost exuberance of his verbosity, was a reserved and taciturn man next to Mr Baldwin after he had been in office a few weeks.

Oratory always remained the favourite target for the invective of this orator; it was, as he assured an eager and attentive body of Conservative students, "the harlotry of speech." Mr Baldwin's own Muse was certainly irreproachable. She could not be accused of meretricious conduct or seeking to melt or seduce us with fallacious ornaments or delusive grace; a highly respectable young woman, her behaviour did credit to her upbringing in the Midlands. But though plain, and at times decidedly halting, her energy was boundless. She rarely rested, and she could never keep still at all when her darling theme was mentioned—the beauty of that priceless virtue, silence. After a time it became a matter of wonder and speculation

whether Mr Baldwin did not continue the subject even in his sleep, murmuring to his pillow "his ineradicable distrust of talkers." In a few months he had expended more breath assuring us that he was inarticulate than most of his predecessors had in executing all their duties.

The infection of his enthusiasm spread, and affected the entire composition of his Ministry. Surveying the list of its members, the most candid and confiding Conservative could hardly avoid doubting whether the number of Dukes to be found in it was not excessive, and to ask anxiously whether this noble band would inspire the same confidence in the toiling millions of Britain as they seemed to feel in themselves, or would shed any new light on the dark problems of the hour.

This phenomenon was soon explained. Speaking at a political dinner at the end of June, Lord Mildmay, whose long and meritorious service in the House of Commons had been rewarded by a peerage, proclaimed that the fundamental merit of the new administration was inability to speak. This, he declared, with an appropriate quotation, was always a sign of profundity. Mr Baldwin's predecessor had told us that the Conservative rule was to be one of tranquillity; but this had evidently been a slip; he had meant to say taciturnity. No doubt it was this prospect that had made it so attractive to our ducal Graces, and prompted them to come forward and save a distressed and labouring country. For they could hardly have been more mute in public if nature had afflicted them with physical dumbness.

Like the eagle, the Duke of Sutherland, as Under-Secretary, had the air as his domain; but in silence, the prime quality of statesmanship, he was far superior to the king of birds. For the eagle sometimes screeches, but the Duke of Sutherland never uttered.

If one might judge by the slightly fulsome paragraphs that were then peeping out in the Press, even the Duke of Westminster had political gifts concealed behind the indispensable quality of public silence, and he intended to exercise them for the public good. Yet no one could have guessed these qualities were there from his performances in the tennis court and in other public fields, where his achievements are far from being the brightest jewels in the Grosvenor coronet.

Small as was the number of these peers of the highest rank, their total figure was yet unluckily larger than the number of Cabinet Ministers. For our Graces number not three, but over a score. It followed, therefore, that the Cabinet, large as it was for an executive body, would have had to be enlarged further unless some at least of our Dukes had resisted the current.

It must have been very hard. For this was almost the first time that it had been possible to command the applause of listening Senates by saying nothing at all. Fortunately, there were rays of hope. The Duke of Marlborough showed his usual fortitude and abandoned politics for the more arduous task—so it was said—of learning to play on the Swanee whistle.

Other Peers, less exalted in rank, rushed in

to seize this unhoped for chance. So soon the Secretaries of State were massed in the House of Lords, and only two out of seven were allotted to the House of Commons. Their concentration in that august place seemed a return to distant and happier days.

The Duke of Devonshire must have thought that the world had turned back half a century to a time when both parties in turn, Liberal and Conservative, solicited his uncle and predecessor in the dukedom to become their leader, and each considered their highest political aims were fulfilled if the head of the house of Cavendish deigned to direct them.

He must often have sighed over that happy period when his uncle's incurable somnolence, ostentatiously exhibited on every public occasion of importance, seemed a proof of the highest statesmanship, and his habit of scratching his head with his pencil, which indicated with precision that the mighty mind was beginning to function, was hailed as an inspiration by a grateful people.

But 1923 was like old times. The present Duke could survey the long line of Secretaries of State sitting beside him to the farthest limits of the Upper Chamber and could almost think the happy past had returned. The motes danced in the golden sunbeams; from the benches rose the buzz of conversation which is never hushed by their lordships except to hear a member of the Government; a noble lord read to them from a manuscript undecipherable even by himself remarks of which nothing could be understood except that they were

totally irrelevant; a dewy-feathered and hereditary slumber weighed down the eyelids of the Duke, and Britain seemed to be sailing along her ancient course of prosperity and glory. A goodly place, a golden time. Mr Baldwin's term of office must have been in the House of Lords a dream of political bliss; a dream only occasionally broken and turned into a nightmare by Lord Birkenhead.

For, inevitable and unanswerable, the ex-Lord Chancellor continued to point out to the noble Lords, with unhesitating eloquence and steely logic, that there were dangers to meet, and that more was required of the Ministry than the mere affirmation that Conservative principles would be maintained. In his ungovernable turbulence Lord Birkenhead demanded action, and even went so far as to ask legislative measures. But he was suffered in patience, and disposed of like everything and everybody else at that time by leaving him without any answer of any sort.

Yet the grand principle of Government enunciated by Lord Mildmay may have been unreliable. The whole art and science of politics may after all not be contained in speechlessness alone. Inarticulate men have sometimes been slow, shallow and unthinking; and some of the greatest men of action have wielded a golden and fluent eloquence. The performances of Mr Baldwin's Ministers in 1923 cannot increase our confidence in ineloquent people.

Three great political knots then lay before these statesmen to be unravelled. If they had disentangled them they would have succeeded, and, if

not, they would have failed. Such a proposition may seem too evident to be worth mentioning; but a doctrine which is exactly the contrary was enunciated by the Prime Minister. He held that works and results matter little; faith is all, and on a solemn occasion in the City, he declared he would rather sink with it than swim without it.

Such a mystic conception of politics was certainly unexpected in a man reputed to be a plain man of business. When the diadem was placed on his brow in June, the nation, genially interested in his sudden rise and curious about their new ruler, learnt that breeding pigs had been his real ambition, and that he had only torn himself from this pleasant and profitable occupation to assume supreme power because the call of duty was clear and imperative.

Mystics in religion, though rare, are familiar, and are exalted to their sublime height by the beatific vision. But Mr Baldwin was a mystic in politics into whom the ecstasy has been poured by the contemplation of pigs. No one could have divined that amid the sties of Worcestershire a new and transcendental type of statesman had arisen, unknown till now in this practical country.

Though Mr Baldwin, according to his own declarations, was prepared to sink with such patient grace, he cannot have been surprised if people in this country displayed less resignation.

But these new doctrines of Mr Baldwin, though they lifted him high above us all, were at the same time extremely convenient to him; for, though his faith was great, the results he offered us were to be very small. It was just here that the face of

the plain business man again pierced through the transfigured features of the Worcestershire mystic. This was evidently a case where transcendentalism had its practical uses.

In 1923, three questions perplexed us. These were, firstly, our relations with our Allies; secondly, our relations with our Dominions; and thirdly, the hideous unemployment and destitution that still ravage this country. Each of them was so delicate and thorny that only great courage, as well as considerable judgment, could pluck success from them. For we might damage Europe equally by opposing France or by blindly seconding her; damage the Empire equally by giving injudicious assistance to our Dominions or shutting the door in their face; and by burdening the taxpayer still more we might damage the unemployed as much as if we left them unaided by the Treasury. In each case only very bold and original measures could hit on the solution.

The Ministers of Mr Baldwin never discovered any, and it was no doubt on observing the absence of them that Mr Baldwin had fallen into his mystic trance. But if his Ministers did not find the way out, it was perhaps because they did not search for it. Another object was too firmly fixed in their minds, impeding all their investigations.

These evils of discord, disunion, and enforced idleness were not new, but old. They had become, unfortunately, almost inveterate, and they had baffled more determined men than his Cabinet. Whatever their ultimate cure might be, it was certain to give offence to someone.

But the chief concern of that Ministry was to satisfy every one, and this seems to have been the cause of their failure. They were too anxious to please; general complaisance and timidity could hardly bring forth those great acts which alone could have pacified Europe, united the Empire, and fed the poor.

In spite of his mystic professions, Mr Baldwin proved too businesslike, and not imaginative enough. Giving satisfaction is an excellent principle in business management; but it is perhaps too simple for the direction of a nation. Some persons must remain dissatisfied, and some displeasure must be risked. Yet Mr Baldwin's Ministers hoped for the esteemed favours of every one, and no doubt for a renewal of their patronage.

Firstly, there were our relations with France. If any method at all existed in their treatment of the Reparations question this must have been it. One portion of our public opinion demanded a strong line against France; so the Cabinet sent the French in July 1923 a note that only just came short of being a declaration of war, for it emphatically declared that the main operation in which they were engaged, the occupation of the Ruhr, was illegal.

But at the same time there existed a large number of people here who vociferously demand that our alliance with France should be maintained at all costs, and Mr Baldwin insisted on delivering the goods to them as well. So on passing through Paris he solicited an interview with M. Poincaré, and displayed an overwhelming politeness to the

very man whose conduct he had denounced a few weeks before. The luncheon blandishments lavished on M. Poincaré looked a trifle inconsistent, coming as they did after the previous denunciations and threats.

At one moment during the year it indeed looked as if the Reparations question was on the point of finding an unexpected and fantastic solution. General Smuts began to heave in mountainous travail; he announced (apparently with the consent of the Government), a conference of the Great Powers unlike anything that has been held since the Peace Conference, and some prodigious birth seemed imminent.

The general, speaking darkly, declared that "the absence of one Power could not prevent the conference from dealing with the situation," and there could be no doubt he referred to France. He at the same time announced that we were going "to give Germany moral support."

As the general rumbled ominously, the political earth seemed to quake under our feet and a cataclysm appeared certain. For there is only a short step from moral to material support, and we therefore might be on the verge of the wildest of revolutions; we perhaps were going to head a coalition against France and take the field on the side of Germany.

While we were still reeling from the shock, and dizzily unsure of what he really meant, the throes of the mountain ended, and the portentous thing was born. But it was quite a small creature, a mere Conference with the participation of the

United States, and, if somewhat larger than a mouse, it at once began to contract to the dimensions of that innocent creature.

Contrary to the general rule in nature, it began, as soon as it saw the light of day, to grow not bigger but smaller. It issued forth as a full Conference of the Powers on the financial capacity of Germany. Then M. Poincaré blew quite gently on it, and so frail was its composition that it at once turned into a sub-committee of the Reparations Committee, with an American financial expert.

M. Poincaré kept on breathing, and though, on this occasion at least, his breath was far from rude, the poor little sub-committee was too weak to stand it, and melted away rapidly and in a short time vanished altogether.

For its duty was soon limited to inquiring into the actual amount Germany could pay. But there was only one opinion on which all the Allies, all the neutrals, all the Germans, and even all of us, were agreed, and it was that Germany's present capacity to pay was, in M. Poincaré's own emphatic word, zero.

When General Smuts' conference had come to this point it was, so to speak, no longer there, and the American expert who was destined to save Europe ceased bothering at once, and got on with his work in Wall Street. For even the inferior European could work out a sum of which the answer was already known. So the Reparations question found itself just where it was when General Smuts had started to make our hearts beat.

Secondly, there were our relations with our Dominions. At an Economic Conference they had been entrusted to the President of the Board of Trade, Sir Philip Lloyd-Greame, whose good will was perhaps more exuberant even than his colleagues. He assured the Free Traders with effusion that no change was contemplated in the fiscal policy of the country. At the same time he confided with expansive cordiality to the Protectionists that the objections to the Preference system were in his own words, a "belated bogy."

His department was to be a cornucopia from which there was to flow all the blessings sought by mankind. It was going to allow food into this island from every part of the world, and we were to enjoy the world's abundance. It was also going to develop the resources of our Empire to its farthest limits, and make us independent of every other nation.

At the entrance of every great shop there stand gentlemen in frock-coats, wreathed in cordial smiles, and radiating benevolence on the entering customer, whom they guide to the right counter. But when their behaviour was compared to that of the President of the Board of Trade, it appeared quite cold and distant. They could have learnt from him how to be all things to all men.

Lastly, there remained the third and last wave, proverbially the biggest, unemployment. Hardly had General Smuts relapsed into immobility, and barely had we begun to regain our composure, when still more titanic pangs seized the highest mountain on the Ministerial chain, no other than

the Prime Minister himself, and still more thunderous rumblings were audible.

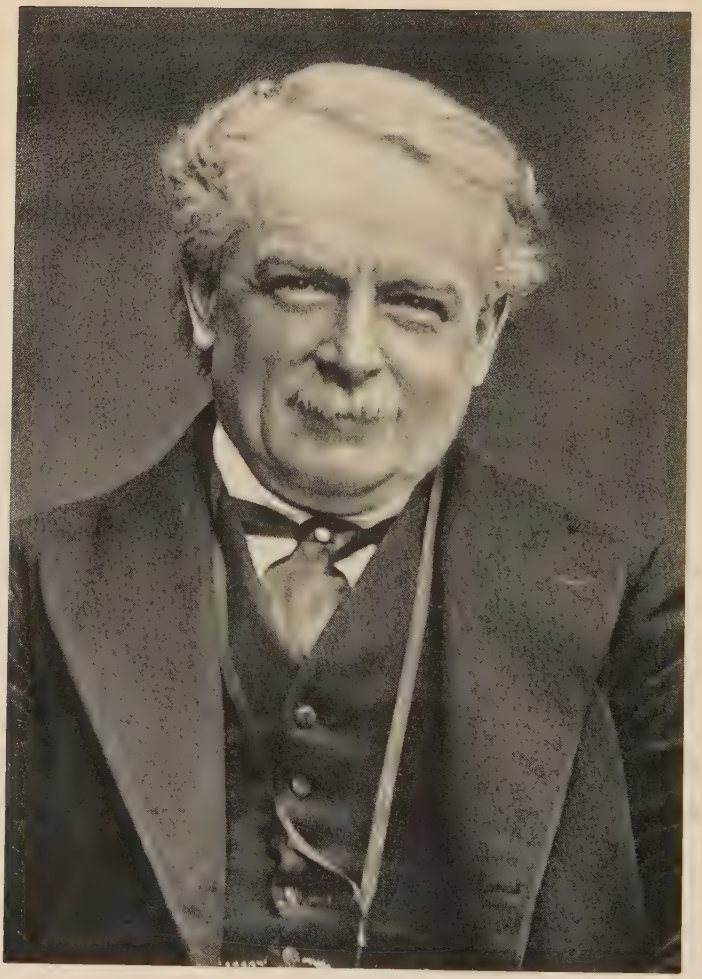
General Smuts had only promised us a final solution of Reparations. But in the autumn Mr Baldwin, though in doubtful terms, spoke of achieving Imperial unity and ending unemployment, and both at one stroke, which assuredly could be no other than a stroke of genius. But his prophecies, though ambiguous, contained almost forgotten words which were like the sound of a trumpet, such as "free imports" and "protecting the home market."

At their sound old Free Trade warriors, slumbering on their glorious couch, half-started up, and many a Protectionist veteran, though not yet fully awake, reached resolutely for his helm and his spear, each prepared in his tent to drink again the joy of battle with his peers on the windy plains of the fiscal controversy.

But this prodigious birth of Mr Baldwin, like that which had sprung from General Smuts, proved even less unshrinkable. Emerging as full grown Protection, it contracted rapidly. In a few weeks it had lost wheat and meat, and was no more than a tax on imported manufactured goods, a very small animal indeed. This indeed could hardly strain our patriotism, but on the other hand, it could hardly achieve Imperial unity and general employment. Soon even this mouse was threatened with inanition, and was indeed soon to expire; but before his demise it ate up Mr Baldwin's majority and ended the career of his Ministry.

It is dangerous to meddle too much with a

disease, even for the purpose of curing it; sooner or later asylum doctors become mad too. Mr Baldwin has spent too much time in curing orators of oratory. It looks as if he were falling into their condition; of late the symptoms have been grave. Perhaps he will find that good speaking is not altogether useless or noxious in Parliamentary government.



MR. LLOYD GEORGE

MR LLOYD GEORGE AND HIS FOREIGN POLICY

Mr Lloyd George's orb set towards the end of 1922, and vanished into the unknown and the darkness of opposition. But there it at once moved and burned with an energy even more intense than it had when it shone as the prime planet of our political firmament. It seemed rather to have gathered than lost force in a course which included sixteen years of office, and six years of absolute authority, the labours of the war and the strenuous political agitation that preceded it, the effort to reach this sublime summit and the opportunity to enjoy the deep cup of enjoyments that is to be found there.

Few can ever have done all this and reached his age without showing signs of slackness or strain or exhaustion. But at the end of it, as this book[1] shows, he emerged perhaps more vivacious, alert, and enterprising than when he started on this wonderful career.

The tenure of power, even when brief and subordinate, disintegrates most men, who cannot resist the flattering, intoxicating conspiracy of the world to relax and blunt and weaken their powers, though the public is debarred from knowing this often

[1] "Is it Peace?" By the Rt. Hon. David Lloyd George. (Hodder & Stoughton, 10s. 6d.)

rapid degradation by the strict decorum of our political controversies.

But this insidious assault rebounded off Mr Lloyd George. Supreme authority has braced and sharpened and fortified him as only struggles and adversity do most people. In spite of advancing years, his flexible genius remains as pliant as ever, and he has very rapidly adapted the diffuse, loosely-woven style of the orator to the more concentrated manner of the political writer. No sooner had he ceased to be Prime Minister than he entered into a contract to write in the British and American press the articles collected in this volume. They vary in quality. His contract called for an article a week, and this is an onerous undertaking, however light an affair it may be to supply an oration a week. A speech floats away and dissolves into air before it can be scrutinised. But the written word is solid and remains there, inviting and compelling examination. Its standard is therefore much higher. Still, whenever he touches a subject that has been handled by him as a practical affair, he can give to his views, whether they are acceptable or not, a substance and pith to which no outside study can attain.

Such vigour and such activity of mind, added to such success and such prolonged possession of pre-eminent power, ought to have kept him in office for ever, had these advantages not been joined to political ideas about Europe which are here set out in a far more unmitigated and uncompromising form than they were in his official utterances while in power.

When he rose to his zenith in the war he was borne along by two great men, Sir Henry Wilson and Lord Milner. But after the war, he took as directors of his political conscience two journalists, Mr Philip Kerr and Sir Edward Grigg. They have both edited a quarterly review, "The Round Table", which, if circulation is any measure of authority and influence, has neither represented a large body of British opinion nor helped to form it. Its back numbers and this book taken together enable us to unroll the chart used by Mr Lloyd George in his latter course.

This chart, by which Mr Lloyd George steered being examined, it is not his fall but his duration for so long a period that is a matter of surprise. For during the whole time he was swimming against the nature of things. Only a swimmer as strong as he is, and with as fine an intuition for the real tides and currents, could have escaped drowning for such a long time.

As the title of the book indicates, it is a study of the world's political disorders. Mr Lloyd George found that the condition of Europe aggravated after the direction of affairs was taken out of his hands at the end of 1922. If it did, it can only be a shade worse. Though for four years he himself had sought peace, he never had ensued it, and his successors received from him an inheritance of disorder.

The unsettled state of Europe since the war has disconcerted and depressed us. After such an expenditure of blood and such an experience of misery, it might be expected to lay aside its

weapons and rest. But contrary to anticipation it has continued to arm and to prepare for war more than ever.

This portent, which both alarms and impoverishes us, has been set down by some to the innate perversity of all people except ourselves. This explanation had the advantage of being easy to understand, and it is no doubt this convenience that has recommended it to our statesmen, for it was adopted by both Mr Lloyd George and the Government that succeeded him. Nevertheless, the reason may be different, and also considerably more difficult to grasp.

The peoples of the Continent did not at the Peace Conference settle their affairs according to their own wishes, or by any methods previously used by them. They were helpless at the time, exhausted, indebted, and utterly dependent.

President Wilson and Mr Lloyd George were irresistible when they agreed, and were always able to impose any ideas they held in common. They both disdained professional advice. President Wilson not only addressed the world in the style of the Old Testament prophets, but, like these worthies, relied for his political views mainly on personal inspiration. Such advice as they did take about the settlement of Europe was obtained from the people of whom it can be said, without fear of contradiction, that they could not possibly know. He occasionally turned to what he termed "his band of scholars," American university teachers who had obliged him by zealously "getting up" Europe as a special subject. Mr Lloyd George

rarely consulted anyone but his solemn English magazine journalists, who are unfamiliar with Continental nations, and very insufficiently acquainted with their languages and histories, and who could never in any event associate with them. They would feel too much horror at the wicked capacity of enjoying life displayed by these foreigners, and especially by our Allies; the Germans, however, have a dose of dulness which has always made them more congenial.

This Anglo-American retinue of highbrows first invented a single new solution for all the old problems, and attempted to force this discovery on the unhappy Continentals. Europe had to submit to schemes, which would have condemned themselves by their mere appearance if they had been carried out in their entire and original enormity.

The basis of this European settlement was to have been the foundation, near Geneva, of an international city of 16,000 diplomats drawn from every nation of the globe, who were to set the whole earth in order. For the League of Nations was to have been nothing less; it would seriously have threatened the independence of the Swiss, whose country would have been invaded by this polyglot army of officials, followed by a still larger army of relations and retainers.

Fortunately for Switzerland, the League in practice has contracted, and it has shrunk enough to be fitted into a few Geneva hotels. Its proportions and its members have become so modest that it hardly takes up more room in that city than the English starting-price bookmakers

and perhaps it is as usefully employed. The British Secretary-General has even consented to our Treasury reducing his original entertainment allowance of £100 a week, tax free.

If this fantastic city of the League had been founded, it would have reduced to an absurdity, by its mere appearance, the dreams of President Wilson's dons and Mr Lloyd George's secretaries.

But this scene, and the conclusive demonstration afforded by it, was not enjoyed by the unhappy inhabitants of Europe. It failed and was abortive. They were then made to suffer from other political chimeras, begotten by the same second-rate men out of third-rate text-books.

M. Clémenceau is an old man, past eighty, without any family, living happily with his books in a small cottage beside the sea. His course is run, and he has no interest in telling anything else but the truth.

In his youth he saw the great structure of the German Empire erected out of the ruins of his country. His life was spent under its overhanging mass and in its terrific shadow. More than any other statesman of the Continent it was his aged arms that clasped its mighty columns, and shook and toppled it to the ground. He is likely to understand Europe, if any man does; in any event, he knows better than any Wisconsin professor or obscure English journalist. He expressed himself about the Peace with his usual brevity and point. He has said that the disorders of the Continent were due to "childish Anglo-Saxon fancies" (les enfantillages Anglo-Saxons) imposed upon it.

For what these highbrows omitted to do was worse than what they tried to do. At the Conference the Big Four, as the four leading statesmen were called, sometimes called in what were known as "technical experts." A shoal of committees and sub-committees swarmed into the room, and spouted in cataracts the information they had previously sucked in.

But there was one technical expert who was never summoned, and who might yet have been consulted with profit, both by President Wilson's professors and Mr Lloyd George's secretaries, all of whom so modestly considered themselves capable of ending war for ever. This expert was Mephistopheles himself, who might have been asked, out of curiosity, how to prolong the struggles of Europe indefinitely. Mephistopheles would probably have addressed the Big Four in these terms:

"France, assisted by her Allies, has conquered a larger Germany. Do not allow France to be made secure. This will keep her armed and apprehensive, and at the same time it will keep alive in Germany the hope and the intention of revenge. Give France various rights of interference in Germany, too inconsiderable to make France safe but great enough to irritate Germany. This arrangement should effect the general purpose of averting any further peace, but another precaution might be added. Do not deprive France of safety; defraud her of it. This will harden her, and at the same time encourage the beaten Germans to evade payment even of their debts. If you make

Germany a debtor, be careful to exclude any reasonable methods of exacting payment. This will get in more poison, endless altercation and ultimate violence. Thus you will have done nothing of what you ought to do. In this fashion the Treaty you contemplate might lay the foundation of a just and durable war."

Mr Lloyd George did, in effect and without any such consultation, carry out the plan of Mephistopheles point for point. In the first place, by a few skilful strokes the insecurity of France was effected, that country at the same time being defrauded as well as frustrated. Secondly, by being given a right to payment and debarred of any reasonable method of enforcing it, she was at last driven to lay hands on Germany.

Firstly, as to security; France must depend for its safety on the goodwill of Germany. This is the doctrine which was forced on France after the war by Mr Lloyd George as the policy of England, and this is the policy which has kept Europe distracted. It is singular in every sense; for its principle has been applied to no country but France. At the Peace the Italian General Staff obtained the Brenner Pass as their frontier, so that any campaign begins for them on German, and not on Italian soil. But the Brenner and the Tyrolese lands round it are as German as Box Hill and Surrey are British. Our Admiralty obtained the dismantlement of Heligoland and the other North Sea Islands so that our fleet can bombard, blockade and invade Germany as it pleases. But those islands are as much part of

Germany as the Isle of Wight is part of England. When Foch contended that he must control the bridge heads of the Rhine to protect France, he was told that his argument was unanswerable, but that his demand could not be granted as it would give too deep an offence to the Germans, by violating the integrity of their soil or their sovereignty.

The French have never understood this exception made against them. Bewildered at first, they have then become enraged, and have attributed it to all kinds of motives, even to bribery. It is perhaps little use explaining to them that it is only the effect of folly, sincere and disinterested, because such folly passes the belief of man. But the views on which this exception is based are to be found printed in the back numbers of the "Round Table." Europe is to be organised "according to the principles of the British Commonwealth." Every one is to be as friendly in it as Australians and Englishmen are. The French, who twice in fifty years have had their soil invaded and their civilians murdered and the womenfolk enslaved, are to embrace the Germans guilty of these inexpiable outrages and to trust their future benevolence for their own safety. This miracle is to be accomplished by bringing their leaders together at tea, where Mr Lloyd George, as another Prospero and waving the crumpet dish as his magic wand, will still the storm which has raged between the Latin and the Teuton, with varying intensity, for more than two thousand years.

One of the directors of his political conscience,

Sir Edward Grigg, adjured the House of Commons from his place in it, not to make the Germans permanently angry, whatever else was done to settle Europe; if possible the French were also to be conciliated; but of the two disputants, the feelings of the Germans, who fought against us in the war, were entitled to at least as much consideration as the French who fought with us. This pacifying idea of his was by no means new, and first appeared in March 1919 at the Peace Conference in a memorandum presented by Mr Lloyd George, and most probably drafted by Mr Philip Kerr. The French memorandum in answer applauded this magnanimity, but regretted that its exercise should be so belated, and that Mr Lloyd George's generosity of temper had lain dormant while he deprived the Germans of their Navy, their colonies, and their mercantile fleet for our benefit, and had only become active when the French demands came up for discussion.

These two gentlemen in their magazine have always supported their policy by arguments which Mr Lloyd George has also adopted. They maintained that the Germans must ultimately overcome the French, because there are 75 millions of them to 45 million French, so that the best policy for the French is to win German sympathy and affection; this could easily be arranged at a conference; all that was needed to efface the effects of a conflict that has lasted for more than a score of centuries, is for Messrs Wirth and Poincaré to meet at a friendly tea; and there, in Mr Lloyd George's own journalistic dialect, which was un-

fortunately only too familiar in Fleet Street before he entered it, "to break bread at the festive board." Thus did Messrs Kerr and Grigg expect to cancel all the memories of Cæsar and Napoleon.

But this argument is familiar to the French. The Germans used it before the war, and its pedantry was worthy of them. Their professors had always proved to the French beyond doubt that they must be defeated, for the odds were seven to four. But the French remained dubious and upset the odds at the First and Second Marne. Since the war they are still harder to convince. For they go by results, and continue to believe in the good fortune of their country and the strength of their armies. If either Germany or France must ride in front, they are determined that it shall be France.

So the French strategic demands at the Conference were refused. Into the wound thus inflicted, a further irritant was poured. A guarantee treaty was offered to them instead, and, when they had accepted it, it was never given to them. They have thus been made to feel they were not only unsafe, but cheated out of safety.

Secondly, reparations were also due to the French. Mr Lloyd George in this book treats the French as exacting and uncompromising about reparations, but he forgets his previous treatment of them. Injustice does not dispose its victim to indulgence, especially when it is aggravated by apparent dishonesty. Germany carved far more than a pound of flesh out of France, and it is only natural for France to insist on full payment of

damages, and is hardly likely to become indulgent and generous as long as she is threatened with repetition of this sanguinary and agonising operation.

Reparations is now an unblessed word, poisoned by years of fruitless discussion and mutual recrimination. But it was simple enough (as we have now found) had it not been involved at the outset in these grand visions of perpetual peace.

For regular international payments on a great scale are quite common; every year this tribute, known as our invisible imports, has always been received by us from many countries. It is to this revenue that we largely owed our high standard of living. These debts originated in invested capital. But it cannot matter whether an international debt is due for money lent or damage done. If it can be paid in one case, it can also be paid in the other.

The people who proclaimed that Germany could not pay a very considerable contribution to us for at least a generation, as the United States or Argentina did for a far longer time, were dupes; or, as is more common in politics, the wish was father to the thought; they did not want Germany to pay. Nor was the amount payable so hard to fix.

Edison was once asked to define a great scientific invention; he answered, it was something a Polish Jew would buy for cash. The amount of reparations could have been defined in the same way. It was the amount a *consortium* of international bankers would have lent the Germans on the security of all their available assets, customs, railroads, excises, forests, mines and everything else

pledgeable. For that is what Germany is worth, just like San Domingo or any other country. Nothing more, but nothing less.

But international payments must often be enforced by arms. This is the case even with money lent, and it was to protect our bond-holders that we landed in Egypt. The method adopted in the case of indemnities or reparations (for the word does not alter the thing) is immemorial. The creditor has always occupied some of the territory of the debtor as a pledge, and evacuated it as and when he was paid. This is what Bismarck did; this is what Napoleon did. It would be pedantry to quote further examples, but victorious Powers have never adopted any other means. Yet President Wilson and Mr Lloyd George made up their minds that they could improve upon Napoleon and Bismarck, and extract money from the Germans by the use of sweet and soothing words.

The French got nothing, and so they took Germany by the throat in the Ruhr, and other methods than those of voluntary payment had to be adopted. The Dawes Scheme, by which all Germany's most convenient assets were put into the hands of Allied receivers for the benefit of the Allies, was adopted eighteen months after the fall of Mr Lloyd George, but five years had then elapsed since the signature of the Peace Treaty. It was so simple and evident a method that one cannot but wonder and ask how it was not adopted before. But the back numbers of the "Round Table" supply an answer to this question.

The golden age which was to begin at the Peace

Conference required the goodwill of the Germans, and therefore a tender regard for their feelings. These could not but be ruffled by an execution levied in Germany itself, and by the presence of Allied agents and trustees. Such proposals were indeed often put forward, and as often rejected. They came up so constantly that in the jargon of the Conference they even acquired a name, the Turkeyfication of Germany. The creditors of Turkey had been given slight administrative rights in the finances of Turkey. But the same slight interference in German finance was treated as sacrilegious. It is for this reason, and this reason only, that a Dawes Plan, or something similar, was not put into operation years ago.

Thus Europe was steadily driven towards anarchy at and after the Peace Conference by the phantasies of a few diplomatic amateurs, well-meaning and obscure gentlemen, speaking English with slightly different accents, but equally afflicted by both ignorance of Europe, where every problem is so old that any Foreign Office can solve almost any question merely by looking up the precedents, and by the vain belief that they, with their thin top dressing of bookish culture, could establish universal goodwill and perpetual peace, and succeed where the wise and the good of all ages have failed.

Such was the policy of Mr Lloyd George in Europe after the war: three years of it dissipated his almost boundless political credit, gained by incredible and superhuman success, and apparently inexhaustible by any mistakes or any lapse of years.

Naturally, our Foreign Office would not countenance these fancies, too shallow to be called even juvenile. So Mr Lloyd George founded a private Foreign Office of his own, known as the Cabinet Secretariat, and, by a choice quite in harmony with the plan, placed at its head an ex-officer of Marines knowing no language but his own, and not very adroit even with that; for he also has been unable to resist the journalistic current and, by precipitating himself into print, has given the world the measure of his intellectual powers, though it must be placed to the credit of his natural astuteness, which is very great, that he has only been imprudent enough to commit this mistake once. This amateur diplomacy was engaged in a duel with the French Foreign Office from the end of the war onwards.

At some games the amateur beats the professional, and at others the professional has the advantage; but in diplomacy it is odds on the professional. The French diplomats set to work at once. Mr Keynes, who is academic with distinction, and in this respect is unlike Mr Lloyd George's secretaries, who are academic without distinction, perceived their method with the text of the Peace Treaty, and has described it in his book. But they deserved well of their country in making it sure against the silliness of Anglo-American highbrows, whom they were not strong enough to resist openly. Beaten at the rigour of the game, it rather looks as if Mr Lloyd George's secretaries took to playing against the rules. Judging by the articles of their magazine and the

course of events, their tactics were to keep every dispute in Europe open, and avoid legitimate concessions to France on the Rhine by wringing an enormous price out of her in other quarters for any such concession. It is hardly open to doubt that Mr Philip Kerr secretly instigated the Greeks to continue fighting while an Allied Conference was sitting to make peace between them and the Turks. But even when the rules are forgotten it is still long odds on the professional in diplomacy, especially when matched against professional idealists; it is safer for people who are only good to remain only good, and let who will be clever. French diplomacy at last crashed Mr Lloyd George with his foolish pilots. He felt sore from the bump long after, as this book shows. But his fall was much more a subject for melancholy reflection than joy. He was the last survivor of the Titan struggle of the war, and perhaps only his strength, properly directed, could have given Europe peace, just as it had given the Allies victory.

This long struggle with French diplomacy altered Mr Lloyd George's outlook entirely. In this book Mr Lloyd George appears to entertain an opinion of the French and the Germans such as would hardly be expected from any person who had been Prime Minister of Great Britain during the war.

The notion he has of our Allies is derived from his own experience of them. Therefore, he not unnaturally has noted in the French a prejudice which most Englishmen will think pardonable, because they share it themselves, a tenacious

resolve to promote the safety and prosperity of their own country.

Mr Lloyd George's conception of the German, however, has not been acquired by constant personal contact, but has been given to him by the shallow, uninformed, but very complacent gentlemen who, during the last few years, have surrounded and guided him, very injuriously for this country and very disastrously for himself.

So the Teuton in this book is the creature of that unimaginative fancy which thinks things are because it wishes them to be.

For it appears that the Prussian leopard has changed his spots, and with them his old ferocious habits. He is now all mildness; has given up singing "The Watch on the Rhine" to warble his old sentimental ballads; reads "The Round Table" assiduously; is devoted to its profound and favourite scheme of ending the immemorial feud between the Latin and the Teuton at a tea-party; and is now an entirely regenerate creature, ready for any demonstration of fraternal feeling, and has no passions left in his once savage breast except enthusiasm for the League of Nations, which may help him to slip off his present handcuffs and postpone payment till he can repudiate his debts altogether.

It was some time after Mr Lloyd George had joined the journalists that the editor of the London daily paper which was privileged to reveal his highly expensive word discovered at last that he was preaching a crusade against our Allies, the French, and predicting their downfall. The article in ques-

tion did not appear. But, though a respectful editor might not notice it, he had been cursing them rather more delicately from the moment he exchanged the seals of office for the journalist's pen.

"Satan," he wrote very early in his series of articles, "has not done with Europe."

Satan has played a great part in the political life of the ex-Premier, who has rarely differed in opinion from any body of men without detecting Satan's presence in their midst. During the war he tracked him out among the Germans, and denounced his activities in many an apocalyptic vision; even the author of the Book of Revelation never saw the Enemy of mankind so often, so large, and so busy as Mr Lloyd George did.

During that period Satan's general headquarters were at Berlin, and the chosen instrument in which he lodged was the Kaiser. But in October of 1922 the victory of the Turks, the allies of the French, brought Mr Lloyd George down from the position of Prime Minister; he must then have begun to suspect a removal of the Tempter. When a general election which took place soon after had confirmed Mr Lloyd George's loss, his suspicion grew into certainty. By December of 1922 he had definitely found him elsewhere.

Satan was then in Paris, "troubling the peace of the world" by opposing the views of Mr Lloyd George.

But instead of concealing himself in any of the fair and enchanting shapes to be found in that city of pleasure, he had, unexpectedly enough, lodged

himself in the elderly and rugged person of Marshal Foch, who had thus become Satan's chief instrument, in succession to the Kaiser. In discharge of his new functions the Marshal was leading astray the whole French people, so that, in spite of "a passionate sincerity" in "the desire for peace throughout Europe," they alone were "working for a failure."

Mr Lloyd George then remembered noticing this opposition, and its diabolical origin, much earlier in the year. It was in the spring at Genoa; Mr Lloyd George had gone there without our Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs or any of the highest expert authorities. He had taken in their place his ex-journalist and his ex-officer of Marines, who supplied him with a modest but comprehensive plan which would have established "a real peace between the Urals and the Atlantic Seaboard." But Satan had made short work of the secretaries, and their multitudinous clerical staff, and he had triumphed amid "the mocking laughter of France." Perhaps it was this derision which, on retrospect, indicated beyond doubt to Mr Lloyd George the whereabouts of Satan at that date.

As the French had grown black, so the Boche grew white. Satan had not only got a new residence, but also had received full pardon and indemnity for all his misbehaviour in his old home.

The monuments of German iniquity have not yet disappeared in Europe. In the West they are most conspicuous. Armies have plundered and ravaged ever since armies existed, but never before in the Christian world have statesmen deliberately

set out to obliterate all the works of man in an enemy country, destroying down to the tiniest tree, the smallest drain, and so making an artificial desert where centuries of human effort had created one of the richest of all lands.

In the East the traces of Boche cruelty, though less famous, are perhaps even more disgusting. In many Roumanian villages not a single child survived the German invasion, for the German quartermasters took from the country all that could be eaten, and did their work far more thoroughly than any famine has ever done.

But these peccadilloes had entirely slipped the memory of Mr Lloyd George. He was in December of 1922 talking in no unfriendly terms of "the millions of men of German blood, history, and sympathies," who are to be protected at all costs. He reflected with complacency on "German towns and villages choked with sturdy children," and dallied pleasantly with the image of these little ogres, destined one day, like their fathers, to outrage little French girls and starve to death little Roumanian boys.

He was proclaiming we must no longer "bark and snarl" at the Germans. He himself can hardly become more mellifluous to them unless he takes the trouble to learn their tongue, and address them in it, so as not to wound their ears with a language that must have associations so recently unpleasant as English.

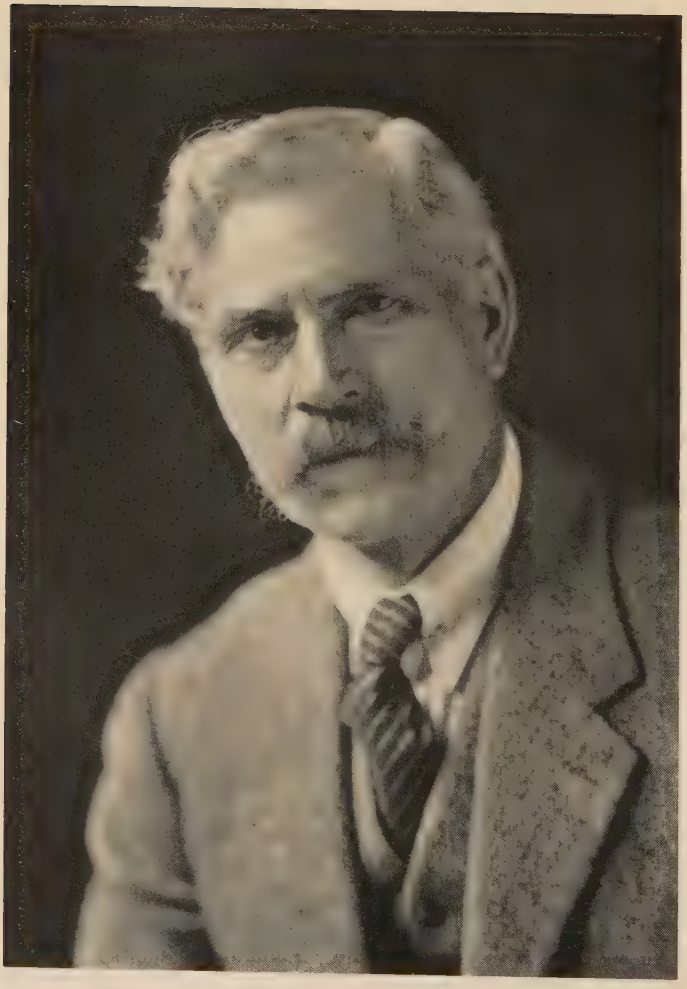
Thus since the war his mind has slowly veered away from the French and towards the Germans, and in this book the last stage of the evolution

can be clearly discerned. When he left office in 1922 he was only a pro-German in the bud; for he could still reflect with complacency that the French would be baffled and that Germany would escape all payment, control, or retribution. When he began to write in the papers he could thus just control his anger, unbecoming as it was in Satan's official adversary to lose it. He could still even then write of the French more in sorrow than in anger, and soothe himself with the prospect of the catastrophes that would overtake them in the future. He foresaw with melancholy satisfaction "a war of liberation" in which the Germans would fall on the French in overwhelming numbers, and in which he would have no alternative other than "to array the invincible might of America and Britain" on the side of those who were "fighting for national freedom," and these, in this particular case, would be the innocent Boche.

But soon after, in January 1923, the French took Germany by the throat in the Ruhr, determined to make her disgorge. Their drums beat again after four years' silence, and the long roll reverberating through Germany told the Boche he could evade submission and plan revenge no longer. This event precipitated the evolution of Mr Lloyd George to its natural end, and he became a pro-German in full bloom.

For the French disregarded and confounded his prognostics. This was the offence which finally damned them. Mr Lloyd George has always got his ideas from other people; he himself proclaims

it, and always insists that a politician is an amateur who must always rely on experts. But like many others who get tips, he is always confident that it must be a certainty, and that he ought to win. After the war he was unlucky: he got hold of no ideas that were not false or shallow. Events refuted them, as was inevitable, but even when a loser he refused to blame the tipsters, or himself, and has persisted in attributing his failures to the perversity of our Allies.



MR. MACDONALD

MR RAMSAY MACDONALD AND BRITISH SOCIALISM

While Mr MacDonald was Prime Minister a fiercer light beat upon him and his words than had ever been put on them before. His style as Premier was surprising, but it was no different to what he had always used, and in this book,[1] published at the moment he took office, he exhibits the same defects that were to do him and his party so much damage when in office.

We might expect from the leader of a Labour Party words plain to the point of baldness, and of an elementary directness. But such expectations are disappointed. These pronouncements of Mr MacDonald on our foreign affairs, which he chose to manage himself, are involved and obscure. His meanings, whatever they may have been, whirl along in a bewildering cloud of language. Even this small piece is apocalyptic. After the closest scrutiny it remains barely intelligible, and perhaps even the highest criticism must confess itself vain. The Prime Minister's cryptic utterings remain unsearchable.

But however much Mr MacDonald may choose to conceal the ideas he professes to expound, he

1 "The Foreign Policy of the Labour Party." By J. Ramsay MacDonald. (Cecil Palmer.)

cannot conceal himself. The words of the oracle are, and without doubt are intended to be, ambiguous and uncertain. But the oracle is there; we can survey him easily enough. He cannot hide himself by talking, as he can his thoughts, and it may be that our conception of Labour itself and of him is erroneous, and that we will never have a Labour Government that is horny-handed, bluff, and unvarnished.

Mr MacDonald, as he tells us in this work, was utterly opposed to the foreign trade system of our actual capitalist society. He condemned it as "wasteful in production, uncertain in result, always liable to be upset." But he was, nevertheless, going to preserve it, and rigidly to refrain from "playing tricks with the mechanism of trade."

He condemned, as his party does, "the old diplomatic method" which "smacks of the primitive man," but he was not going to change it. He was "going to take the world as he finds it," and not "begin all things from the beginning again."

He was for disarmament. "We have to abandon absolutely," he said, "every vestige of trust in military equipment." But, on the other hand, "no responsible statesman will ever persuade the people of this country to disarm," and he was not the man to take the responsibility. The doctrine of the Balance of Power in Europe "deserves every sneer and anathema that has been thrown at it." But he intended to "continue to be interested in a Balance of Power policy" as a "simple traditional determining purpose of our policy."

He adhered to the League of Nations, and in it

he thought we must find "the focus of our contacts with Europe"; but, on the other hand, "we must not become the mere cat's-paws of the League's devotees," and where American co-operation is obtainable "the League should not be allowed to stand in the way."

He thought the success of his party "ought greatly to improve the chances of America and ourselves co-operating," but denounced "all sectional alliances."

These bewildering somersaults were not accidental. Other politicians have varied, but they have at least admitted that consistency was a virtue, and excused themselves for their disregard of it. But Mr MacDonald, for his own benefit, has created a new philosophy of the inconsistent. Any doctrine, he holds, may be accepted in a "general and abstract" way, yet "the necessities of the case compel us to modify it," and do something very different.

Thus Mr MacDonald, before he gave us a full revelation of himself as Prime Minister, was distinguishable enough, however dubious the oracles which he casts forth; he was always a very weak man, and kept his convictions conveniently fluid. They have no fixed shape, and in this book he practised a crude legerdemain, juggling with them, and pouring them first into one vessel and then into another, and without doubt they were destined (as indeed we afterwards learnt) to take their final shape in the form most likely to suit Mr MacDonald's political interests and vacillating character.

Many good people, too candid themselves to attribute anything but candour to others, have judged the Labour Party by its language. In their professions these Socialists are certainly Utopian, and, if judged by their speeches, may be either applauded or feared as chimerical. But this is a mere manner of speaking, and is widely disconnected from their manner of acting. Most Members of Parliament who have mixed with the Labour members have thought them to be, not visionaries at all, but very wily, if not very intellectual, men.

In this quality of cunning Mr MacDonald is thus highly representative of his party. In this book he can be seen wielding their peculiar form of cant, which in his case has also a fine high-minded flavour that the scholastic profession can always give. But it is certain that his lofty sentiments never interfere with his interests; on the contrary, their very loftiness will always be used to help their author, as his book shows. It is cast in the form of answers to questions. But pointed as the questions are, Mr MacDonald declines to be pinned down to any definite answers at all, and uses his flow of imposing, but vague, generalities in order to avoid doing so.

The Origin of Socialism

In one of his earlier books, republished soon after he took office and called "The Social Unrest," he gave us a brief sketch of our past history, whose toiling millions (according to him) went on suffering

more and more throughout the centuries till a few years ago, when trade unionism "was transformed and transfigured by the ethical idealism of Socialism."

As Mr MacDonald observes in his reading of the past, social unrest is eternal: but Socialism only appeared as a cure about a century ago. He does not explain why, nor why individualism till then was always treated as the best cure for poverty. But unless the late appearance of these doctrines is explained, their real nature cannot be understood.

Socialism is a mistaken cure for a very real disease, and appeared about the same time. Mr MacDonald, like most of us, is misled about the past. Till the end of the eighteenth century Western European civilisation was agricultural; Europe was a world of peasants and princes, with a little commerce, lovely, but sparsely populated, and so weak as to be barely able to hold its own against Islam. Since then it has adopted urban industrialism, and become ugly, densely populated, and so immensely powerful that it has almost overrun the globe. This revolution began on this island, because from our position we were able to conquer India. The spoils of that continent furnished us the large masses of capital without which a country of factories and railroads cannot arise.

But our institutions, laws and customs, had been made for a world of farms, not of factories. Hence terrible evils arose, the worst of which have now disappeared. Perhaps the most dreadful, the sweating of child labour and the slaughter, for generation after generation, of scores of thousands of these

innocents, reveals the nature of the disease most clearly. Our grandfathers did not permit these atrocities, without parallel in Christian or heathen history, from cruelty, for they were as humane as we are. As long as men had worked on farms there was no need to regulate child labour: the earlier a boy got out to work on his parents' fields the better.

But it took fifty years before men would interfere to protect children herded together in a factory, and mostly swept there from workhouses. It took ten years of agitation in the Reform Parliament to pass a law limiting the number of hours during which a little child could be made to work in a factory to ten a day. This is a single example, but the same conditions prevailed everywhere. We only slowly learnt to adapt ourselves to this new urban industrial life. In consequence the masses suffered agonies, and the process of adaptation is far from complete, as our slums witness. These conditions were the soil in which Socialism sprang in a few years, and soon overshadowed Europe. And, as a glance at the electoral map shows, it is only in industrial Britain, the Clyde, Durham, South Yorkshire, South Lancashire and South Wales that it has taken root.

The seed from which it grew also came from England. All our thinkers at that time, led by Darwin, tended to look upon the universe as being mechanical: one of them, Mill, treated economics from this mechanical point of view. Wealth, according to him, is the resultant of land, labour and capital combining under different conditions.

He underrated the part played by the energy and ability of man in creating it, no doubt because he was looking at a new country of rising factories, and not at farmers battling with nature. The moral deduction is that the organiser or capitalist is entitled to little or no wealth, since he helps very little to create it.

Our ideas are our chief export, little as we know it, and these were wafted everywhere. The moral deduction, which Mill had never made, was drawn by other people. One of them was a German Jew, Karl Marx, whom prejudice has swollen and distorted into a bogy, but who was really a man of muddled head and exquisitely tender heart. He was maddened, as Charles Dickens was over here, by the sufferings he witnessed, and in a manifesto which has not yet ceased to ring in our ears he denounced the useless capitalist employer as the cause of the evil, because it was he who was exploiting his fellow-men. Indeed he was, but not more than men always have and always will when the law allows them to. If it were otherwise, the police would be superfluous.

The attraction of Socialism lies no doubt in the "ethical idealism" the Prime Minister speaks of: but it lies still more in the nature of the cure offered by it. Its panacea, the substitution of an official for an employer, requires no mental effort. The real remedy, appropriate legislation, is not only too difficult for laymen, but is almost too difficult for lawyers. To perceive the particular necessity of each law demands a great intellectual effort, and to draft one is a still more delicate and arduous

task. For example, men on a farm do not require special protection from machinery, because it is not dangerous: but it very often is in a factory. Yet our workers waited a century for the Employers' Liability Act.

Most of the worst sores of industrialism have healed: it is easy to forget how many and how hideous they once were, because no party cares to remind us of them, and least of all the Socialists. For neither they nor the other parties provided the effective remedies. The real healers, like Lord Shaftesbury, belonged to none, and, if anything, were rather Conservative, like Disraeli. Shaftesbury was an aristocrat and had an aristocratic independence of mind that disregarded both timid Tory prejudices and ruthless Liberal fallacies. Whatever others might argue, he was resolved to save the offspring of the poor from massacre in factory and mine, and to stop a yearly child sacrifice made out of economic superstition far greater than any child sacrifice ever made to Moloch out of religious superstition. Few of the really remedial measures, which touch the inmost life of the poor, are due to nineteenth century Liberalism, and none stands to the credit of its great leader, Gladstone.

Socialism was thus an international doctrine; so had Liberalism been; so had Protestantism. For similar conditions produce the same ideas. But conditions, though similar everywhere, are not everywhere identical. Socialist ideas, therefore, take on their special shade and shape from the soil in which they are planted. On this island of ours we are mad about morals, though morals for morals'

sake defeats its own purpose, like art for art's sake. For in the soul, as in the body, we cannot specialise in a particular part. No man can devote himself only to the health of his head and chest, neglecting his stomach and omitting to use his legs; he will fail in the very object of his efforts. But English Socialism is overcast with this ethical hue of English thought and by our fanaticism about conduct and character. Its most thoughtful exponents (among whom Mr MacDonald must not be counted) have tried to base the Socialist State on a more general and deeper sense of duty. It is worth while stating their orthodox doctrine as forcibly as possible; for it attracts millions of people, and no ideas, however fallacious, which have this power over the minds of men should be dismissed with contumely. The argument of English Socialism is as follows:—

The Theory of English Socialism

Professional men do not exert themselves only for profit. Army officers, or doctors, or university teachers are remunerated, but they have other motives than gain. They recognise themselves to have duties; but business men have only rights, and profit is their sole object. A doctor does not raise his fees because there may be a sudden, fortuitous demand for his services; but farmers and millers raise the price if chance diminishes the supply of wheat and flour. A college don does not charge more because university education is more popular; but a house-builder will charge

more if there is a greater demand for houses. Except for these professions, our society is organised as a business of acquisitive society. Each man gets as much as he can for his goods or services.

Hence, so runs the argument, its evils. Proprietary rights should, so far as possible and gradually and as circumstances permit, be eliminated from our society, and all men could then work in it in the same way as professional men do, and without profit as their exclusive object.

The argument is not usually put so plainly or so modestly: the leading authority for these ideas[1] uses language more grand and imposing. Industry is to be "liberated from the domination of proprietary rights." We are to have a "functional society where the performance of service is to be substituted for the acquisition of gain." Every occupation, even coal-heaving or riveting, is to become a profession of which "every member will feel responsibility for the success of the undertaking as a whole," because new motives will be liberated. Even coal-hewers (once the mine owner is gone) "will know the self-discipline of responsibility and professional pride," and they will feel "associated in the service of the public," and "will undertake that their work should be effectively performed." These are at present the fashionable doctrines. They are far from being revolutionary or bloodthirsty, and are not altogether unplausible. They are a very native growth of the Socialist seed. They will not be refuted by denouncing the failure of other ideas which are not being disseminated here,

[1] Mr Tawney.

and which, though also called Socialist, come from plants of Russian or German growth.

In the society which they aim at establishing, all the staff and hands in a boot factory would work, not for the highest or market-price of their services, "for grab" as it is called, but for "social purpose," as doctors are supposed to do in a hospital or dons in a college; these receive remuneration, but do not pursue profit alone.

To quote one of their leading authorities: "The work of making boots is no more degrading than healing the sick . . . it is just as necessary and just as honourable." The bootmakers, once in possession of their factory, would have as a "stimulus to efficiency" not cash, but "corporate pride in their profession," just, for example, like the dons of a successful Oxford college.

It is certain that these views have met with no refutation, even when they were brought forth with a very practical purpose, as they were when it was proposed to nationalise the coal mines. They then received no answer except the favourite, indolent, and feeble retort that they might be right in theory, but that they were wrong in practice.

This, the commonest retort to Socialist argument, is effective enough when a principle has been put into practice and failed, but not while it remains theory. It can only be countered then by proving it wrong in theory too.

As it will be heard of again, not only with regard to the mines, but with regard to the railroads, it is worth considering. If the dons of a

college conduct a college for the benefit of the public, and if its officers manage a regiment for the King without having any shareholders to satisfy, why should not miners and railwaymen similarly manage the mines and railroads for the benefit of the consumer?

The answer is that there are some employments where the motive is, and can only be, money, and there are other occupations where other and far different motives arise. Intellectual interest and humanitarian zeal must form part of the inducement to become a don, who does accept very inadequate payment because pay was not the whole inducement. And men become officers for a variety of reasons, in which love of fighting has at least a part; before the war a Guards subaltern would contract to give his life for £90 a year.

But the miner and the engine stoker will not work for intellectual interest or humanitarian zeal, or love of fighting, because no opportunity exists in his particular occupation to satisfy these impulses. Only money can be an inducement to undergo their labours, and both insist, quite rightly, in getting the highest market rate, as neither don nor officer does.

There is a scale of occupations, and mankind, more sure in its instincts than confused thinkers in their ideas, recognise these differences, sometimes with great nicety, for in the law it places the advocate above the attorney. There are different levels of activity, and social distinctions reflect, though by no means with complete justice, but only roughly, the differences.

One of the leading Socialist authorities says that "the difference between building schools and teaching in them, and between providing food and providing health, is illusory."

But such a proposition is shallow, unthinking, and, if the word is not too pretentious, unspiritual. Teaching and medicine call into play very high faculties of the human spirit, and are worth doing to a large degree, for their own sake.

For this reason, and not because they "have applied the principle of purpose," professional men work for other motives than payment alone. But selling milk and making bricks have no such interest: no one will ever do them except for cash.

Every occupation in our society is, to quote the same authority, "equally necessary and therefore equally honourable." A scavenger and a law lord are equally necessary. But they are far from being equally honourable, not from false and snobbish, but for profound and philosophical reasons. The work of the law lord requires the exercise of great mental powers, the scavenger's does not.

Perhaps artistic production and scientific thought are still more absorbing than law, so that some will pursue them even if they starve. Go high enough in the scale, and men will work though you almost starve them, and continue though they become bankrupt, like Rembrandt, and die paupers, like Mozart. Go to the other end of the scale, and money is the only reward. But there can be no inducement to make boots except for profit; what our authority calls "grab."

So any scheme of social change which attempts to organise competing industries as if they were professions will fail, because it will depend on motives which do not exist.

English Socialism in Practice

Such is the theory of English Socialism, and its doctrine of service, which the Labour Party always acknowledge in their manifestos, and such perhaps are its fallacies. It could never perform its promises, and, so far as it can be applied, its result must be a diminished production of commodities, and not a removal of social evils. But if it cannot do what it professes to do, Socialism can do something else, and both the acts of Mr MacDonald and his writings help us to understand its use and power.

The spectre of Socialism has frozen our hearts for nearly half a century. Unlike other spectres, the more distant it was, the more formless, huge, and horrible it seemed: as it approaches—and it certainly is racing towards us with longer and longer strides — the more human its aspect becomes.

But human beings are real, and must be taken into serious account. Spectres are illusions with which we may, when we are in the mood for it, give ourselves a not unpleasurable thrill. Real creatures may affect our bank balances and investments, as the creations of our imaginations never will.

Nowadays the Independent Labour Party holds

a conference every year in London to proclaim its continued faith in Socialism. The very place they meet in manifests a change. A generation ago Socialism spoke in the open spaces of Trafalgar Square, whose vastness was appropriate to the bigness of their schemes, and the party met in the open air and on the pavement to which the outcasts of society are driven as their last refuge.

But the thunder-claps of those stormy meetings are no longer heard, and the hard earth and the inclement sky have been abandoned. There is a hall in the West End where excellent music is provided at prices within the reach of the humblest purses—the Queen's Hall. It is thus the evening haunt of that class to which the rather clumsy name of "the lower middle class" might be applied—the class whom the ardent Bolshevist of Russia stigmatises as petty bourgeoisie.

It is there that the Independent Labour Party meets to make its annual profession of orthodox Socialism, unpreceded by haggard and ragged crowds of the disinherited proletariat, and moving comfortably and obscurely to its destination by bus and Tube—just as the petty bourgeoisie does night and morning.

The Socialism it professes there grows more and more discoloured; the red is fading, but the new shade, if less alarming, is infinitely more dangerous. The annual party conference spends its time washing out the brighter and more frightful tints.

Communism and what is called in the mystic language of Bolshevism "the dictatorship of the proletariat," have been thoroughly, carefully, and

most ostentatiously disavowed. The sanctity of the National Debt has been affirmed with a solemnity that would have satisfied even the directors of the Bank of England. Thus the small man, with his War Loan patriotically bought out of his meagre savings, and concerned about the horrors which he has heard take place in Russia, is reassured.

The orators of Queen's Hall, having coaxed him to the edge of the fold, intend to draw him inside it. They steadily spread an enchanting prospect before him. The Independent Labour Party, adhering firmly to its profession of Socialism, will shift the whole burden of taxation from his shoulders if he will help to put them into power.

That is, in effect and in a word, the positive programme of Labour. The small man will have his fleece untouched; on the other hand, every one above him and every one below him will be shorn clean. It is a doctrine of spoliation—and ultimately of destruction—far milder and practical, and therefore far more dangerous, than any of the orthodox forms of Socialism; or, rather, it is not Socialism at all. It is an extreme form of Radicalism—and therefore far removed from theoretical Socialism. The greater the divergence, the greater the progress Labour makes in the electorate. Whatever verbal homage it may continue to pay to the doctrine, the Party in practice may be expected to abandon it more and more. But it is in the behaviour of the Socialist leaders, here and elsewhere, that the transformation manifests itself most clearly.

Every trade is notoriously exposed to certain

complaints; the particular bacillus to which the agitator is exposed is the capitalist bacillus. This micro-organism is always present in the revolutionary, who usually remains immune during the period of struggle; success and office, however, nearly always have a weakening effect. The comforts and satisfactions of authority weaken his powers of resistance, and, if they are continued for any length of time, certain familiar symptoms, such as an itching for property, appear, indicating that the revolutionary is again the victim of his ancient enemy. The most conclusive pathological sign is that the subject, formerly turbulent and uncompromising, falls into a listless moderation. The only treatment which has yielded definite cures is deprivation of power and emolument. Such operative measures, though often excruciatingly painful to the patient, sometimes effect a considerable improvement. But often the process of metabolism is so far advanced that their application is useless. The parasite continues its ravages, and ultimately, as in certain crabs, entirely substitutes itself for its victim. The blood-red revolutionary becomes true blue, and produces the no less familiar hard shell or crusted Tory.

Where Socialists have been exposed to the hardships and dangers of office, as they have on the Continent since the war, there have been some sad cases of ardent Socialists cut off in the prime of their career by this implacable enemy. M. Albert Thomas, the eminent French Socialist, may be mentioned as a particularly touching victim of this dire epidemic. At one moment he was drawing

simultaneously a good salary as a French Socialist Minister and an enormous income as a high official of the League of Nations. His party summoned him to renounce one or the other, and he was compelled to choose between fighting the good fight with a comfortable but very precarious ministerial pay, or leaving the fray to draw a permanent official salary much larger than that of the President of the French Republic. M. Albert Thomas, after a plucky struggle, succumbed and was carried out. He abandoned his official position in France and has since devoted himself to the service of humanity at Geneva by superintending the collection and collation of international statistics as to the overtime rate of pay of infant female wool-workers.

But it is in Russia, where Socialism has run its course to the very end, that the victims have been most numerous. A band of Bolshevist envoys lately descended from the mild regions and the calm serene air of the Socialist heaven in Russia to the smoke and stir of the feverish capitalist country of Britain.

Other missions had arrived from Moscow before that of Mr Rakovsky, and if they had not attracted such general attention it can only have been because they themselves sought the shade, and preferred to execute their errands of hope and mercy in the most obscure seclusion. Before his mission these angelic visitors had arrived in the ports disguised, and by ones or twos, and certainly not in the bright pomp which jubilantly ascended Downing Street to meet Mr MacDonald in the train of the triumphant Mr Rakovsky.

It was the habit of these Socialist seraphs during these earlier unofficial visits to veil the gorgeous ardours of their beating wings by the use of false names, pretended business purposes, and personal disguises, no doubt to avoid interruption in their works of grace.

Yet such is the hardness of the capitalist heart that almost the same greeting, and perhaps the very same hosts, met Mr Rakovsky's glorious cohort as used to be waiting for their more modest but more militant forerunners, who bore no sign of their heavenly origin but forged or stolen passports. In whatever shape these benevolent guardians of frail and erring man descended on this unrepentant island it was always Scotland Yard that welcomed, escorted, and watched over them with unceasing solicitude.

Perhaps some of Mr Rakovsky's assistants, as they issued from their comfortable hotel to breathe the fresh air of spring, recognised old friends among the groups of quietly-dressed men who lounged with such studied carelessness near its entrance and who touched their hats to them with such deferential alertness. They perhaps recognised in one of these vigilant guardians of their personal safety the same familiar, inquisitive, and pertinacious person, who, during their previous and less ostentatious visit, had always travelled in the same railway-carriage and dined at the next table, and who was so intrusive that he could only just be prevented from drinking out of the same glass and sleeping in the same bed.

The visitors, however, from the Communist

heaven who surrounded Mr Rakovsky were just as disappointing as their more secretive predecessors were said to be by those who were blessed with their company. All betrayed the worst, and perhaps the incurable failing of the practical Socialist, which is that of resembling the capitalist so closely that they are undistinguishable.

The first luncheon Mr Rakovsky's company consumed, during the conference held between them and the then British Government, was a profession of faith infinitely more sincere than all the lurid manifestos fulminated from the Kremlin by the immortal Trotsky. The abolition of pampered and unjust wealth was inaugurated by an early meal in which caviare, artichoke soup and lamb cutlets formed the less substantial courses. In Great Britain, the degenerate country of effete individualists, such an achievement at midday would probably surpass the powers of a veteran company promoter, hardened by a long life in the most expensive hotels, and specially trained for this trial on a diet of turtle and champagne. If the enemies of predatory wealth could perform these feats when the sun was high, imagination is strained to conceive what they must consume when it has set, and they rest from their labours on behalf of toiling and harassed man.

But it is not only in outward behaviour that capital claimed them for its own; it had stamped itself on their inward disposition as well. The essential nature of capitalists is to be drawn toward capital, especially in its liquid shape as money, with a force equal to the force of gravity; some, indeed,

are hurled toward it with such headlong impulse that large bodies of lawyers, police, and inspectors exist to moderate, and sometimes to arrest, their too impetuous career in this direction.

Mr Rakovsky had a similar sensitiveness toward the magnetic object, and thus, in spite of his exalted Socialist origin, proved himself no different from ordinary mortals who struggle for a living. In his opening speech at the conference there was only one real, hard point, which was the few words he spoke about "credits": the rest was soft stuffing intended for the simple comrades back at Omsk and Tomsk.

This sweet company of Socialist saints that sat at the Foreign Office during the first half of 1923 suffered, like the common ruck of men, from a burning thirst for cash, and their panting breasts and parched throats could not be quenched till they had drunk from the cooling waves of a large and flowing overdraft.

We did not hear the mutual effusions of Mr MacDonald and Mr Rakovsky, nor did we contemplate the first occasion on which the Socialist Minister of one country negotiated with the Socialist Minister of another. Yet the secret diplomacy of the old and unregenerate world was once the favourite theme of our then Prime Minister's denunciations: he had told us so often it was the cause of all the ills which international life is heir to.

It was, therefore, surprising to learn that the room in which these memorable scenes were to be enacted was too small to accommodate any of the

Press or the public. This surprise was followed by another when it was announced that our information would be confined to an official *communiqué* issued daily or, should it seem advisable, even more infrequently.

But it had not been otherwise in the black days of Salisbury and Ignatieff. As soon as these reformers cut the cackle and come to the horses their performances are no different from the old exhibitions with which we have too long been familiar. In diplomacy, as in economics, there is something very old-fashioned about these innovators.

Our own British Socialists had not been in office very long when serious and alarming signs of individualism could already be detected. If there is any portion of the capitalist system which its partisans might feel was in need of defence it is the joint stock company, which limits the liability of the shareholder to the amount of his share. Roman law, individualist as it is, forbade such incorporations, as calculated to make the shareholder indifferent to the management of the undertaking. It ought therefore to be peculiarly objectionable to the socialist who reproaches the whole capitalist classes with this very indifference, and for this very reason would transfer their interest in mine and railroad to the miner and the railwayman. Socialist writers of authority, like Mr Tawney, are frenzied at the very thought of the hewer in the dark mine shaft labouring to maintain indolent shareholders in luxurious West End flats. The joint stock company is certainly the instru-

ment by which the *rentier*, the drone, maintains himself. The share certificate is the very badge of capitalism. It was, therefore, with surprise that we learnt that our first Socialist Prime Minister, Mr Ramsay MacDonald, was the third largest shareholder in a prosperous biscuit-making company in Scotland.

But the information was as much a source of consolation as of wonder. It acted as balm to many conscientious souls who had been touched by the preaching of the Socialist gospel, and had begun to have uneasy doubts whether it was right to have investments at the bank at all. Judging from the excellence of the article he supplies, Mr Ramsay MacDonald's dividends must have been substantial. Yet they did not offend his delicate Socialist nose. Others, therefore, with coarser olfactory senses, could feel assured that their dividends were wholesome and untainted, even if they were the reward of supplying to the community commodities less indispensable than biscuits and shortcake.

Whether we consider the conduct of the party or its leaders, Socialism in practice is a movement in a very different direction to its avowed objects. Its connection with its highly ideal theory is only verbal and formal; it is not real and effective. In this it resembles Liberalism.

When, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the newly enriched middle class displaced the old oligarchy, they used their position for themselves, and their opposition to Shaftesbury's Factory Acts shows how little popular their acts

were; but their language was popular. Liberalism was their form of words, and by using it their voice was capable of swaying men's hearts and gaining their deep and sincere devotion.

At the end of the nineteenth century a lower middle class, newly enriched and roughly corresponding to the organised trades unions, has arisen. As soon as they were in power they used that position for themselves. Their acts, such as their indifference to unemployment and their obstinate refusal in the housing question to sacrifice the interest of the building unions to the interest of the public, are not popular. But their language is. Socialism is their form of words, and by using it their propaganda is also capable of swaying men's hearts and gaining their sincere and deep devotion.

Mr MacDonald and his party, though numerous, are still only a fraction of the whole nation. But they mean to go on with their present work. For themselves, and themselves alone, "they will try," in their Leader's words, "to attain their goal," which is the construction of an odd social edifice, where railway-porters earn more than skilled engineers, and municipal dustmen enjoy larger incomes than beneficed priests, and the poor go without houses so that the building Trades Unionists may live at ease. The real Socialism on this island is the displacement of the old and upper middle class by a new and lower middle class who, as the conduct of their leaders indicates, take to saving and investing just like their more prosperous predecessors. These leaders, humble and respect-

able men, are just as anxious as any peer to give dowries to their daughters and university educations to their sons. The first Socialist to reach Cabinet rank was the first Labour Leader to send his son to Oxford, and the first Socialist Prime Minister almost at once accepted an interest in a biscuit company worth £1500 a year.

Russia can teach us a lesson about this movement, if we are not too prejudiced or panic-stricken to read its events. Now, as always, the movements in the West are reproduced in Russia in an unmitigated, and therefore in a monstrously exaggerated, form. Where these ideas prevail in an extreme form, as they do there, a small section batten on the rest of the community, its leaders are insatiable of riches, and the wealth of the country is wasted. In a very mild and attenuated way, and to so small a degree that comparison is hardly fair, the same is happening and will happen here.

This conflict between the idealism of Socialist theory and the rapacity of its practice cannot be maintained without perpetual contradictions, and the leader of such a party should be a man who can think and say two opposite things on every possible topic. Mr MacDonald not only can say and unsay, but by force of necessity and now of habit he never says without unsaying. When at the last General Election a fierce glare beat upon his every word, this was observed by most people for the first time. But his books are whirling limbos of mutually destructive opinions. Only thus can the forcible and iniquitous methods by

which his followers exploit the community for their own material interest be justified in the jargon of Socialism's "ethical idealism." The verbal jugglery with which he does it is worth studying. Its plausible hollowness bears a singular resemblance to the economic verbiage with which Gladstone opposed reformers, like Shaftesbury on behalf of the sweating Radical manufacturers who voted for him.

THE EARL OF BALFOUR

LORD BALFOUR AND ZIONISM

NATIONALITY, though unquoted in the market-prices, is an article of export from Western Europe, like machinery or cheap alcohol.

It is new even here, if measured by historical time and not by the brief life of man, and in the Island of Britain it is not more than six or seven centuries old. In Eastern Europe it was till lately, like English horses and Paris fashions, confined to the class that could afford such luxuries: in those regions the peasantry, labouring at the soil with the dumb and unthinking tenacity of animals, were only distantly aware of it.

During the last generation or two things have changed. A number of nations have discovered that they are nations; some were too bewildered by the new idea to discover it themselves, and a kind friend had to do it for them.

The Czechs, for example, had dim memories of struggles long ago. But it was an English journalist, Mr Wickham Steed, who discovered Czecho-Slovakia. No one had heard of it before it sprang, complete, from his brain; and few nations have so distinguished an origin. Compared with it our own is shabby and second-rate. We can only look back to King Alfred and William the Conqueror as founders, and in their parentage and careers there

are many things it is not polite to mention; they certainly never had the polished urbanity of Mr Steed.

This game of nation-making has even spread too far for the comfort of Czecho-Slovakia. For the Slovaks have taken to it and are beginning to resent the Czechs. Prejudiced and industrious professors will no doubt soon have supplied them with a dialect, a forgotten literature, mediæval patriots, forgotten fights for freedom, and a history of foreign oppression—all, in fact, that is required to justify a demand of Slovakia for the Slovaks.

Journalism has also the honour of having created Jewish Nationalism, or Zionism, as it is called for short. It was brought into the world, about the time Lord Rosebery won the Derby, by a Warsaw journalist, M. Sokoloff, who, even among the Jews, was remarkable for his versatility. For a period of time that must be numbered in thousands of years the Jews have lived in their millions between the Baltic and the Black Sea, lapped and sleeping in their antique, strange, Semitic civilisation, almost as different from Europeans as the inhabitants of Central Arabia. But Semitic as they were in culture, they are, or have become, a northern people, and there is probably a far larger element of Tartar blood in them than any other.

A few generations ago they also, like their neighbours, began to be westernised; for western civilisation has spread farther and farther eastward in the course of the nineteenth century, and the Jews, like all the races on the same longitude, Russians, Poles, Turks, and Egyptians, have fallen

under its influence in varying degrees. Clothes are an outward sign of an inward condition, and among all these people larger and larger numbers began to wear the dress of London and Paris, morning coats, lounge suits, and bowler hats. They adopted too the inward ideas of which this dress was the manifestation; these also were the ideas prevailing in London and Paris, and the chiefest of them was nationality. It might almost be called the religion of our time, whatever faith we may profess, for we consider that our country may demand from us every sort of sacrifice, even to the extent of our lives, and few people in the modern world think as much of their particular creed. But a century ago these semi-oriental people between Europe and Asia did not know what nationality was. Turks and Egyptians, if asked to what people they belonged, answered they were Moslems, and the Jews that they were Jews. They could no more have told to what nation they belonged than a Zulu could tell to what school of metaphysics he belongs. Poor Polish emigrants in New York, knowing that all Poles are Catholics, still believe that Catholics must be Poles; they cannot distinguish. We carelessly imagine that our political ideas are natural, and (often very unfortunately for everyone) act upon this hasty belief. But they are peculiar to ourselves, and this one and most others are a legacy of that pagan antiquity from which, though indirectly and through a Christian channel, almost all our civilisation is derived. The conversion to western life (for it can hardly be

called less) of these semi-oriental people was so simultaneous that the new classes formed by the change appeared as political parties almost simultaneously towards the end of the nineteenth century at Cairo, Constantinople and Warsaw; and these parties were so similar that the new political party took the same name, Nationalist, in each of these capitals.

In Egypt we suffered much by the change. When we went there a generation ago, the Egyptians, being still oriental, welcomed us. We were infidels, and therefore dogs, but we had as much right to be there as they had, and could rule them if we respected their religion. Since then, largely owing to our benevolent policy, large numbers of them have become Europeanised, and therefore have begun to think just as we do. These Nationalists consider that a country belongs to its natives, and foreigners have no right to be there except as a favour, and have none at all to govern it; and so they now demand our departure. Foremost as we are in the East, we have been the first to suffer, but we will not be the only ones, or the last. All European States that have African or Asiatic dependencies sow unknowingly their own ideas which later spring up armed and intractable to baffle them.

In Turkey the consequences of this assimilation have been terrible. For the Turks were a ruling nation, with a history of victories and military conquest such as no other people can show, and had all the fierceness of such a caste. In their heyday they had been most tolerant, far more than

we were in those times. But under the influence of the new ideas they went to the furthest degree of intolerance. Their Nationalists said the Turks must be the only people in Turkey, and, applying their ideas with native ferocity, proceeded to exterminate the Greeks and Armenians who had been there fully as long as they had.

The Jews on the north shore of the Black Sea are akin in blood to the Turks, but their culture is Semitic, like the Egyptian. Their transformation begun earlier, and has been far more wide, deep, and rapid. Now fully half of their millions between the Baltic and the Black Sea have discarded the gabardines and forelock for lounge suits and bowler hats.

How the Jews were assimilated and how so many of them migrated into Western Europe during the nineteenth century is not understood; but it is worth understanding because their presence here is singular and strange.

Three centuries before our era, Greek civilisation flooded Asia and Africa, and Hellenised, or partly Hellenised, all its people. The Semitic tribes in the Highlands of Palestine, the Jews, resisted this influence, and there is nothing in the world we know better than the history of their resistance; for it is told, or part of it is told, in the New Testament, and still more of it in the Apocrypha, which happens not to be included in our Bible. Whoever the authors of the books composing our New Testament may have been, they were certainly Hellenised Semites, Greek speaking and writing in Greek, and therefore, in various degrees, Greek

thinking. All Christians during the first centuries of Christianity who have left us any writings were Greek speaking, and ultimately the whole Hellenistic world in Asia and Africa became Christian. Christianity is Hellenistic in origin, so much so that it was not thought necessary that its sacred books, those of the New Testament, should be translated from the Greek into any other tongue, not even into Latin, for centuries, and, great as is their power in every language and enchantingly beautiful as they are in their English version, they cannot now be really understood except in Greek. All the Jews would no doubt have succumbed to Hellenism, as most of them did, had they not been scattered all over the world by a conqueror. Their settlements were most successful on the north shores of the Black Sea; for its Tartar tribes were, and still are, largely attracted to orthodox, or genuine, Judaism. So this primitive Semitic civilisation spread along the banks of the Dniester and the Vistula right up to the snows of Vilna and of the Baltic, and the Jews are as much native of this part of the world as any people can be natives of any soil, and were there centuries before the Russians, who only reached the Black Sea a few centuries ago.

After covering the Semitic world for a thousand years, Hellenism, in its Christian form, exhausted itself, and Semitic culture, which had been overwhelmed but not destroyed, emerged again in the form of Mohammedanism, and wiped out Christianity in its original regions all over Asia and Africa, except in a few places and in a few faint traces.

Christianity only survived in its Western or Latin form, and was only saved from Islam and heathendom by its knights and saints after a desperate struggle, of which the issue was still undecided only 1000 years ago. Judaism—orthodox Judaism, not the westernised form we know in England—is closely connected with Islam, of which it may be called a primitive form. The evidence of language, dogma, and ritual is conclusive and incontrovertible on this point. A less valid, but more obvious proof, is that every sight and every sound in the ghettoes of Warsaw and Lemberg recall Cairo and Tangiers.

The Jews have, during the nineteenth century, been more fully, widely, and deeply westernised than any other of the people contiguous to Europe for four reasons: firstly, because they are Semitic in culture; secondly, because they are primitive; thirdly, because they are northern; and fourthly, because they are commercial.

Firstly, because they are Semitic: Christian civilisation, being Hellenistic in origin, is reasonable, and therefore moral; its ideal has, roughly speaking, been one of goodness. However great the authority it has attributed to its sacred books, it has never fettered itself by refusing the human spirit any freedom outside certain texts. Its zeal for book-learning, which it now miscalls education, is quite new, and, at most times in its history, learning has been considered rather diabolical than meritorious. But Semitic culture has an ideal of erudition; virtue and piety consist in knowing a book, the Koran or the Law; there can be no sure

salvation without knowledge of these texts. So, the Semitic world is, and always has been, far more educated than ours, though educated in what—with all respect—we are bound to call nonsense. Cairo University is much older than Oxford or Paris. Hence the rapidity with which Moslems of Egypt and India can absorb our knowledge, sufficiently in a generation to make them able, or make them think they are able, to dispense with us.

The Jews have always had this peculiarity to an intense degree. The Moslems, who, being most closely connected with them, understand them best, call them the "People of the Book." They are exactly as they were when the authors of the New Testament were writing. These writers reproached them with their too strict and exclusive fidelity to what the translators of our Bible call the Law: this is a correct translation of the Greek word which is a correct translation of the Hebrew, but the word Law is misleading because the thing referred to is what we call the Pentateuch. This is the Book, the Law; the whole duty of man consists in an exact knowledge and a meticulous application of its text, construed to its remotest deductions, and outside these limits he has no duties. The Law, for example, says: "Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk"; Therefore no butter of milk must be eaten with meat to avoid the risk of infringement; therefore separate sets of cooking utensils and crockery must be kept to avoid the risk of any contact between meat and butter. Every jot and tittle of the text is so treated, and this constitutes the whole duty of man.

But the culture embodied in the Pentateuch is very low. Many of the stories in Genesis are so savage that the translators of the Bible never dared to put them into English without alteration, and the prescriptions of Deuteronomy are mostly magical.

The Jews thus present the paradox of being far the most barbarous but far the most educated people in Europe. Their neighbours, the Polish farmers, can rarely read, and their neat, bright farms are bookless. The village Jew lives in ignoble squalor, but every week of his life he pores over the Hebrew volumes whose obscure and shapeless script, next to the luminous and shapely Latin letter, in itself indicates an inferior culture.

It is in consequence of this erudition, common to all Semitic people but exceptionally deep with them, that they can drink up Western knowledge so fast, for much of it, though by no means all, has been deposited in books.

The second reason for which the Jews assimilate so rapidly is that their culture is so very primitive.

When people of a high and refined civilisation that is perhaps equal to our own, like the Chinese, meet us, they refuse to change; our whole way of life does not seem superior to their own. But it does seem superior to the Jews, and they abandon theirs as entirely as they can.

The third reason is that the Jews are a northern people, at least half Turanian by blood, and largely mixed with Slavs and Teutons. They can adopt our habits of life as Arabs, for example, cannot.

The fourth reason is that they are commercial.

Just as the Turks are only military, and have to rely on other people for almost everything else, so the Jews are—in their native seats—only commercial. Exclusive occupation gives special skill. As long as the cavalry arm ruled the battlefield, the Turkish chivalry was unvanquished and invincible. But the modern western world is constructed by business men for business men. The Jews have been sharpening the skill we admire so much centuries before we began, and so are capable of holding their own in this world as other races are not.

For these four reasons, the Jews have been westernised faster and more completely than any other race that have come under Western influence. With them the change also began earlier than with others. For they were subjects of the Czars, whose mission was to compel their subjects to become European by force. But with the Jews the Czars succeeded only too well. These particular subjects in consequence assumed so predominant a position that the Czarist administration was compelled to expel them from Russia proper; and in the succeeding Soviet Government, which seeks by force to impose the very latest and most fashionable of our ideas on the unhappy Russians, the Jews naturally occupy almost all the places.

Such was their transformation, and one result was their migration into Europe itself in large numbers. During the last two centuries Europeans have penetrated and overrun every other continent, subjugating or exterminating their inhabitants. But the only race who have been able to penetrate

and settle among Europeans are the Jews, and this occurrence has not ceased to surprise most people, dismay some, and infuriate a few. During the last century hundreds of thousands have been poured on to both shores of the Atlantic, and New York is now their greatest capital.

Their presence in hundreds of thousands on both shores of the Atlantic is not understood, because the Jews and every one else are agreed in treating as fact what are fictions or errors. The Jews have not been separated from Europeans or (what is really the same thing) Christians only by theological differences. In their genuine and unassimilated state they belong not only to another civilisation, but to one which is now almost extinct. It is sometimes said they are a persecuted race: this is directly contrary to the truth. They are highly privileged, in that they have been exempted from the process of change or improvement to which many people have been subjected by force. They are sometimes treated as mysteriously decadent. This is also the reverse of true. They are antique, and almost prehistoric, like those species of animals which survive when the rest of the genus is extinct. We derive our civilisation from Rome; yet Rome and its grandeur are distant from us by a long remove of time. But the way of life now followed with such strictness by Jews in the ghettoes of Crimea and Poland was observed no less strictly by their ancestors when Rome was still an obscure village. Popular instinct, wiser than false learning, has fixed, not upon their theological

beliefs, but upon their noses as being their distinguishing mark. The Jews inherit it (as the monuments show at a glance) from the Hittites, and thus display on the shores of the Atlantic their direct connection with a race who were great and flourishing in Western Asia three thousand years before the Christian era.

In spite of their vast migrations from Poland westward, millions of westernised Jews were left in Poland, and about a generation ago the ingenious M. Sokoloff concluding rightly that they would not be complete till they had a nationality, straightway invented it. The Nationalist or Zionist Jews had almost everything that was wanted; a language, or rather two; separate race; and a very old history remarkable in that the people who have always liked the Jews least are the very people who have always believed in their history most, and who devoutly teach their children that Omnipotence itself interfered in early Jewish history, and endeavoured, though without success, to manage and guide their affairs, and, in spite of egregious failure, was not discouraged, but deigned to dictate, word for word, an exact account of the sanguinary dispute of Jewish Kings and prophets. All M. Sokoloff therefore needed was a country.

Here, unfortunately, circumstances and history did not agree. M. Sokoloff had not the same latitude as Mr Steed when he begot Czecho-Slovakia, or the literary gentlemen of the Sinn Fein Society when they invented Ireland. He could not reject early history of the Jews. The

unfortunate part played in it by the Almighty had made it too notorious, and too flattering as well. M. Sokoloff and his fellow Zionists were debarred from discovering a past suited to the present, as historians do for us and everyone else every day of the year. They could not get away from the Old Testament. Now this history placed the Jews on the banks of the Jordan; but actual circumstances placed them on the banks of the Vistula, of which region they are in fact as native as anyone can be of any place. To M. Sokoloff's ingenious invention, therefore, Palestine was indispensable. But it was separated from the Jews by sea and mountains and long stretches of land, and so remained inaccessible and apparently unprocurable.

At this critical moment an event occurred more important in the history of Judaism than the exploits of King David or Judas Maccabæus. The event was the arrival of Mr Balfour in Manchester as a parliamentary candidate.

Mr Balfour's mind is microscopic. It delights only in the minute. His favourite occupations in life have been making fine points and hitting small balls, and the smaller the mark he aims at the more he enjoys himself. His intellectual habit is to refine his subject to the breadth of a hair, and then to split that hair into a multitude of sections, each of which is again infinitely divisible. No man of such overflowing and misplaced subtlety could have approached, far less entered, English politics, if he had not, almost without any effort on his part, been put into the first place by the august nepotism

of his uncle, the late Lord Salisbury. For that statesman had long cast his shoes over the Legislature, and even the Judicature was his wash-pot.

In London Mr Balfour can enjoy himself in his own way, surrounded by elegant troops of light-footed ladies as by herds of gazelles. They gaze upwards with deep, dewy eyes at him as at a giraffe, whose natural elevation enables him to reach subjects inaccessible to small, if graceful, creatures like themselves. But they handle him not less easily than they do other men; suave and engaging they listen to him slowly spinning his endless web of involved speculations without understanding, or probably even hearing, him. In these innocent recreations he has expended much of the energy of his needlelike brain. At Manchester, however, Mr Balfour found himself surrounded by Conservative stalwarts, licensed victuallers and the like, who jarred the tenuous and sensitive filaments that float out from his mind and delicately curl themselves round any matter that presents itself to it. To escape from the shocks thus inflicted on him he made friends with a highly cultured Jew, Dr Weizmann, who was hardly less analytical and well read than himself. Dr Weizmann was an ardent Zionist, and, unlike his forebears, believed that Judaism was a political condition, and not a religious belief. In his study Mr Balfour took refuge from the jovial publicans, and was there converted to Judaism—of the political kind—and learnt that the only piece needed to complete M. Sokoloff's otherwise complete outfit was Palestine.

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Many years afterwards, Mr Balfour found himself with that very piece in his pocket. Sir Philip Chetwode and his khaki cavalry burst into those mountains so abruptly that their military ruler only just escaped in his pyjamas. Mr Balfour was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and he did not forget his old friend, Dr Weizmann. He issued a proclamation in which Britain promised Palestine to the Jews.

Mr Balfour, as Lord Balfour, subsequently defended his action in the House of Lords. Swaying like a tall and venerable poplar in the wind, he reproached their lordships with shrinking from what he called a great experiment. But that experiment is being conducted with public money at a time when the suffocating mass of taxes almost chokes the life out of us. Any other speaker making such an appeal would have been overwhelmed with sarcasm. But their lordships always behave as if it were not gentlemanly to contradict or even to differ from any of the late Lord Salisbury's family.

The continued occupation of the Palestine uplands ought to have been a simple question of strategy; now this question bristles with many other thorny considerations. It was culture that did it. If M. Sokoloff had been less accomplished, and contented himself with being an ordinary Russian journalist, alternately bombing and bribing the police; if Lord Balfour had been less intellectual, and contented himself with being an ordinary Conservative statesman, to whom politics are only an alternative, and an inferior alternative, to hunting and racing; then the occupation or the

evacuation of Palestine could have been decided at the War Office, quite simply and easily.

The matter would have come before well-dressed, practical officers of the General Staff, who care far more for the crease in their trousers than for all the sociological, historical, and political problems in the world. They would have reduced the question to its simplest element, whether or not the Suez Canal can best be defended in Palestine or elsewhere; and thus this burden might have been taken off our backs.

THE EARL OF BIRKENHEAD

LORD BIRKENHEAD AND THE CONSERVATIVES

Once upon a time Nature grew discontented with her own profuse carelessness, and with a world where she flings into every round hole nothing much better than a square peg. So she determined to produce a human creature fitted to his place in the universe with exquisite exactness.

A flawless man was above her powers; she had tried too often not to know it. But certain species exist to whose members shortcomings as well as virtues are requisite in order to carry out their functions. Here Nature no doubt considered that perfection was not unattainable, and her choice for the purposes of this experiment fell upon that tough and highly insular species of man, the Common Law advocate.

The date at which she formed this resolution must have been about half a century ago, for at that time Lord Birkenhead was born.

In one of the happy phrases that are scattered in two volumes of papers[1] and speeches by Lord Birkenhead he speaks of "the combination of qualities which is the soil of great forensic success," and declares them to be "undefinable."

[1] "Points of View." By Lord Birkenhead, Lord Chancellor of England. 2 vols. (Hodder & Stoughton, 42s.)

The qualities cannot perhaps be defined with a strictness sufficiently rigorous to satisfy an exacting judicial mind, but they can be recognised, and this same soil is to be found in these volumes in a rich and fruitful mixture.

To attain, or even to approach, the high eminence to which Lord Birkenhead leapt so swiftly and so lightly, a man must serve two merciless masters, either of whom imposes a service which alone is too crushing for most people. Somewhere in this book the author calls politics "a hard taskmistress." The law is another, still more unsparing.

A barrister must serve and satisfy both, if he aspires to the highest honours; still more so if he is to reach them early. If he neglects either arena, law or politics, he must miss or retard ultimate success.

In each of them the game is different, so that aptitude and training for one unfits for the other. In the Law Courts or on circuit, the discussion of fact and principle is exhaustive, minute, and subtle; at Westminster or on the platform it is passionate, general, and plain.

When Mr Balfour, then at the height of his parliamentary reputation, first heard Rigby, the great Chancery leader of the day, speaking in the House of Commons, he was astonished at his feebleness, and said to an acute and entertaining friend: "If that man makes twenty thousand a year at the Bar, I could make forty thousand."

The friend retorted: "If you had gone to the Chancery Bar, Arthur, you would have been

universally respected, written a legal book, and made about seven hundred and fifty a year."

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But Lord Birkenhead has matched himself against the picked gladiators in either arena, and has proved himself at least equal to the best.

He was endowed, and this book reveals it, with the very style for this double purpose. It is a style lucid to a degree which few speakers can attain who have not subjected themselves to the discipline of juridical training. The chain of argument, however long, is so closely woven and so clean of all irrelevance that it runs to its last link, however distant, without checking or swerving a moment.

On the other hand, it is clear of that dulness which hangs heavily on all lawyer orators. "He never missed a good point," says Lord Birkenhead of one of them. But too many good points make a heavy speech as too many good courses make a heavy dinner. The speeches of lawyers are not seldom indigestible.

The author's English is no less dignified than logical. If it rarely allows itself any outburst of rhetoric, it never drops into baldness, or stereotyped phrases; it is at just the right elevation over the language of ordinary men, neither unformed nor slipshod like their own colloquial speech, nor too sublime to be outside their reach.

But above all it has the smoothest fluency. So easily does it come, that his speeches have the same finish as his articles; only in his written words the stream, running rather slower, can flow

still clearer. This is almost the only difference that can be detected.

Such fluency is innate and cannot be made; the rounded periods fell from his lips as easily in his adolescence as in his mature age. It is the main weapon in the equipment Nature gave him, and the instrument is neither too fine nor too common, and, therefore, it is exactly suited to the range of practical work he imposes on it, from delivering a judgment in the House of Lords to addressing a meeting in the Albert Hall.

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Solidly and unalterably Conservative, hewn out of the Conservative rock, this mighty champion has never, except in moments of peril, been very welcome to his party. For Conservatives are deeply planted in the national soil, and are racy of it in every fibre, and are usually to be found springing up in the richest portions of it. They have all the shrewdness required to get and keep so favourable a position, and a profound suspicion of the brilliance that is not often found there. For the splendours of art and thought are sometimes poured on other things than gentlemanly conduct, sporting skill and taste, and worldly position in the shape of lineage, wealth, or title; yet most Conservatives respect nothing else in the universe, or rather nothing else is visible, and, if dimly seen, merely an object of cautious dislike. They can therefore only object to the light that reveals them. So their favourite form of government is one composed of magnates and mediocrities, and to it they always revert when they can afford the indulgence.

The magnates are of the same kind as themselves, though rising with a stouter trunk and spreading with an ampler foliage; and the mediocrities are reassuring, for they evidently are not original or able enough to threaten change in an order of things which most Conservatives would like to think perfect, since it allots to them the best places. At recurring intervals in their history they have done what they did in 1922—discarded a Birkenhead with relief to hug with ecstasy the Ministry that escorted Mr Baldwin to utter defeat.

This indulgence in their natural tastes often threatening them with ruin, they are far too wise not to perceive where the combined mismanagement of their magnates and mediocrities will lead them; and being quite as full of public spirit as of prejudices, they sacrifice their predilections to the Conservative cause when the need arises as readily as they do their lives to their country. At almost equally recurring intervals, therefore, they have turned, though reluctantly, to the prodigies, to a Disraeli, or a Randolph Churchill, or a Chamberlain, however much they dislike and distrust them. For, though blind to the gifts and graces with which these great men are adorned, they are able to measure the power this greatness can exercise, and the results it can achieve. Curbing their feelings with sturdy commonsense, they submit reluctantly to the guidance and the inspiration of genius, sighing secretly all the time for a W. H. Smith or a Bonar Law, flanked by a cohort of Dukes and dullards. But, though sometimes obedient to genius, they are never really

devoted to it till it is obliging enough to die. The great Conservative loyalties are posthumous loyalties; for them there is no good genius but a dead genius. It is on the grave of Disraeli that they scatter flowers, and Chamberlain never became a political prophet till he lay in his tomb. During most of their lives, the Conservatives treated them, not as demigods, but as disagreeable necessities. Though political prediction is always hazardous, it may safely be predicted that they will never be able to do with or without Lord Birkenhead.

To the disadvantage of egregious ability, Lord Birkenhead has added that of being a lawyer. Great forensic skill has never been liked in our legislature. Lawyers play too hard a game; the style of the Strand is far too fierce for Westminster; for prevaricating witness and slippery counsel must be tackled at a pace and with a vigour unsuited to the mild and dignified gentlemen who hum and haw in the House. The searching and implacable argument of lawyers would be irresistible were it not usually so boring as to deprive it of all influence. But some of them have added brilliance to their own terrific professional logic, and these have often been pursued by a hunt of obloquy which has proved fatal to them, as in the cases of Lord Westbury and Lord Brougham. It is especially in the House of Lords that this ruthless rhetoric has always provoked resentment. That Chamber has always contained a small body of politicians who can look down on the House of Commons as "the temple of bourgeois mediocrity," to use the words of Lord Curzon. In their own

lofty and urbane way this group can stand up and debate with anyone. But the majority of peers have not only abstained in life from every field of real controversy, but move through it surrounded with general deference; and some of this numerous body, though unimportant to the rest of the world, are important to themselves in no small degree. The members of this great mass of peers are as unequally matched with a leader of the Bar as a domestic cat would be with a Bengal tiger. Lord Birkenhead does not by disposition or training bear fools gladly, nor has he ever stooped to manage—as Disraeli did—those who happen also to be hereditary legislators. But the influence of peers in the Conservative party is out of all proportion to their numbers, or even their wealth. They, or their ladies, or their sons, or their brothers, or their uncles, or their cousins, throng every department of it. A little management or a little cajolery would have been a low price to pay for their favour. And a little patience or a little polite hypocrisy would have gained him more supporters than all his pre-eminent talents, of which most peers are only aware from their effects.

But for the very exceptional qualities of mind Lord Birkenhead enjoys, a price must be paid; nothing, not even skill, can be had for nothing. In these volumes deliberate limitations disclose themselves which are the obverse of these accomplishments, and almost their very condition. Without the defect the virtue itself could hardly have come into existence.

The limits within which the mind of Lord

Birkenhead moves with such mastery and facility have been contracted by him; it has abandoned interest in what is outside the practice of his profession and the struggle of parties, and such interest as it has in other matters is fugitive.

No doubt this is one of the secrets of his success. Perhaps Nature, in her design of perfection and by a judicious dispensation, provided that he should not be attracted by anything that was unlikely to develop his powers or promote his career.

Even when he does take up anything disconnected with his absorbing occupations, such as the character of Lord Kitchener or the battle of Le Cateau, the bias asserts itself. He conveys his ideas by bringing down a huge hammer of argument on some opposite view and shattering it to pieces, and so, by a sort of virtuosity, gives a display of forensic ability where there might seem to be no need for it.

Again, the prepossession appears in the very agreeable character sketches to be found in this book. Lord Birkenhead was the friend of some of the golden youth of the age who died in, or soon after, the war—Edward Horner, Neil Primrose, Jack Scott. These sketches are a pious tribute to their memory. Next to these is a portrait of a lawyer, the late Sir Samuel Evans.

The young men remain hazy and conventional figures. The portrait of Sam Evans is as weighty and solid as he was himself.

It constitutes an epitome of every barrister's life —the arduous, unremitting toil, with its constant, exhaustive demands on his intellectual energy; the physical fatigue which the exertions of a growing

practice inflict; the constant risk and chances by which, at every stage of his slow and laborious ascent, the practitioner may slip from the path of wealth and office into failure and obscurity.

The young men, attractive and romantic figures as they were, and personally endeared to the eminent author, dwell only in the suburbs of his interest. But he writes of uncouth Sam Evans and all the efforts and hazards of his career with genuine sympathy, and therefore real art.

These volumes, like other writings, must not, therefore, be read only to discover and weigh literary merits or blemishes. Their attraction is different and far greater. They must be read for what they tell of a man who has excelled in fields of achievement where perhaps the very finest minds in this country concentrate and compete. Such a man cannot be otherwise than very remarkable, and a book by him is no less so.

MR. CHURCHILL

MR CHURCHILL AND THE WAR

During the twenty years of his political career, Mr Churchill has been a character in our politics so different from any other that his true features have hardly been distinguished. He is, perhaps, even different from anyone who has ever been in them, and, as a member of a class not otherwise found there, he has not been properly identified. But he is a rhetorician, and even a professional rhetorician. He has deliberately cultivated the art of verbal expression to the exclusion of his other faculties, and perhaps to their cost.

Great as the prizes are which oratory can gain in the House of Commons, it has never flourished there. The records of Parliamentary eloquence during the last two centuries are an immeasurable Sahara of dulness, unexplored even by the most curious, with here and there a fresh and wonderful oasis, like the speeches of Burke, which is certainly not haunted by the ordinary member of Parliament. For public speaking is a form of literary art, and in its combination of reason and passion one of the most difficult; far more difficult, indeed, than poetry, and there are far more good poems extant in the world than there are good speeches. But most ordinary members are not only unpractised in this or any other art, but do

not really believe in the need of art at all. If they did they would never tolerate the hideous and vulgar decorations, the loud and stagey frescoes, the ready-made and shapeless statuary of the building in which they meet. In this Philistine prejudice, however, it must be allowed they are genuinely representative, as they would not be if they insisted on having statuary and structures like those in which the citizens of Venice or Florence used to meet in an ancient and happier time. Most people, therefore, who enter Parliamentary politics are like a man determined to go fox-hunting, not only without ever having tried to ride a horse, but disbelieving in the need of such an animal. Yet anyone mounted, even badly mounted, could lead a field that was on foot, and the first places in the kingdom have been won by very moderate powers of speech. The "bright golden flower" of eloquence is

> "in this soil
> unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain
> treads on it daily with his clouted shoon."

But, it should be added, the debates and decisions of our Parliament are none the less wise and sensible on that account. Real performers, who can draw from the lovely instrument of English speech something really worth hearing, have been few and rare. The dramatic contests of oratory supposed to take place at Westminster are the invention of lively journalists catering for a public which always requires life to be rouged, painted, and powdered before it will attend to it at all.

There are no more bright colours in most debates than there are in the discussions of a Board of Directors.

But Mr Churchill is abnormally æsthetic, little as he seems, with his bull neck and rough energy, to fit the conventional and perfectly false conception of such a being. The aptitude is hereditary, for it crops up everywhere in his family on both sides, and it must be very strong in him, for if he comes across a new medium, like paint, he cannot resist precipitating himself along this new road, although it does not lead to any place he wishes to reach. To this natural aptitude he has applied a tenacious, passionate study, begun early and long continued, so intense and so deliberate that even now, at the age of fifty, the influence of his models is discernible.

He has not the verbal flow and ease of his father, Lord Randolph, who only took to a Parliamentary career because his peevish temper had for a time closed to him the social circles he liked and lived in; whose style grew involuntarily out of an inveterate taste for a few masterpieces like Gibbon and Jorrocks; and who, after his resignation, returned to Newmarket and racing with far more zest than he had ever left them for Westminster and politics. But his son has steadily and patiently forged his style, not for its own sake, but as an instrument of ambition and Parliamentary success. It was consciously made to gain that opportunity for power and action which is his real object in life, unlike his father, who had none, or none so lofty.

Mr Churchill cannot, as is well known, improvise very easily; telling as his speeches are, they are wrought, rehearsed, and often half read. To produce at all, Mr Churchill, in his books and in his speeches, heaves like a mountain; but so do many other Parliamentary personages, and with even greater toil, yet nothing more than a literary mouse trots out. But if Mr Churchill's throes are volcanic, so is the result—a burning flood of lava, often uneven and tumultuous, but sweeping and splendid in its general effect.

At the outbreak of the war he occupied, perhaps, the greatest position in the world. For he was First Lord of the Admiralty and head of the British Navy.

The chiefs of the German and French armies might well be proud: yet in the history of these armies there had been many vicissitudes, and there were many dark memories, a Jena or a Sedan, and they stood embattled on the brink of a doubtful contest. But our Navy had never known defeat or even failure; it was not only unvanquished, but it went into battle with the firm and reasonable assurance that it was invincible, for never had its material strength been so great and rarely had its superiority been so overwhelming.

The first volume of Mr Churchill's history of the war[1] tells how the Navy prepared, and assembled, and went into battle, and it is worthy of the theme. No greater praise could be given to it than this simple compliment. Many leaders of many nations

[1] "The World Crisis 1911-1914," by Winston Churchill (Thornton Butterworth).

have given us books about the war. But Mr Churchill's stands first, unapproachably first, and it would be unjust and injurious to it even to compare with it the publications of the Ludendorffs, or the Painlevés, or the Czernins.

It is a vast and sumptuous panorama. Huge as it is, and crowded with figures and incidents, it remains full of life and colour in every portion. Technical as many of the discussions are; often told as many passages have already been; uneventful, except for a few flashes, as were the naval operations of 1914; fluent and copious as his book is, the first large volume of which only reaches to December 1914; yet it never sinks or even flags, so vivid, swift and various is the large and sweeping brush with which Mr Churchill paints the picture in.

Some portions of it are memorable. The author says the memory of Admiral Wilson is precious to him: so will the portrait of him remain to all those who have dreamt what an English sailor should be. Many of the sea-scapes and sea battles had been published before. Whatever their technical merits may be, they are steeped in the keen, salt air of sea and battle. The whole atmosphere of high command—the excitement of struggle, the desperate uncertainty, and the sober confidence in the fighting men, the deep darkness always immediately in front, however much it lifts from day to day, as the war races and rushes along its course —these can be felt here as in perhaps no other book, for no one with such a style has ever held such a place.

Some slight reservations might be made. It is to be regretted that Mr Churchill's models have not been writers of classical simplicity and severity rather than authors like Carlyle, whose example expands and forces Mr Churchill's natural abundance and exuberance into still more ample and tropical luxuriance. There is perhaps rather too much controversy, and the author should have had sufficient confidence in himself to write for the large and distant public which will be indifferent to them. The authorities and texts cited might have been conveniently grouped apart rather than in the story itself. But, whatever comments may be made, it remains a superb piece of war history such as no other country has produced.

But in the panorama thus unfolded the author himself appears, and in almost every scene he is one of the leading figures. We have thus the portrait of the artist, by himself, in many positions.

His mind is most curious, and almost abnormal. It is apparently so developed on the artistic side as to suffer almost from atrophy on every other. No criticism is made here, or could be made, of his capacity as First Lord. He devoted several years of eager, ardent, absorbed study to his duties, and must have been competent to discharge them. But the world crisis he deals with included other matters than the action of the British Navy; and here the contrast between his descriptive powers and his knowledge is very great. For example, a succession of bloodless diplomatic contests formed the prologue to the drama of the war. They supply the author with some splendid scenes, but only

scenes. His account of them is not only superficial, based on meagre information and untouched by any analysis or profundity of thought, but he is evidently content to remain uninformed and unphilosophical.

Panorama satisfies him. Whenever it is possible to test his knowledge he is not only—if a blunt and discourteous word may be used—ignorant, but strangely unaware of his own blindness, and indifferent to it.

The field of knowledge is so vast that no person can possess more than a grain of it; but that possession, if full and firm, is a measure which warns him how much or how little he knows of any matter on which he must think or act. But Mr Churchill seems devoid of this trained instinct, which very many mediocre men enjoy. He is armed only with a magnificent literary instrument and at times seems satisfied with any random set of facts and ideas out of which he can raise his lofty structure of words.

At no moment has it crossed his mind that further evidence is procurable and further analysis required. The defect is purely intellectual, of course; he is the very reverse of untruthful, and carries candour to the point of imprudence. This fault is, like his corresponding artistic power, both natural and developed. The most eminent of living Harrovians, he showed little promise at Harrow, and was quite baffled by the small sum of miscellaneous information which constitutes a school education. His early entry into public life, apparently so lucky, was really unfortunate, because he never subjugated himself to the discipline

of close and exact thinking to which all his competitors have submitted themselves either in a university or a profession or a business, and which would have corrected his natural bent.

To this weakness is due his appearance of reckless presumption, a general, reiterated charge brought against him, and which appears to be corroborated by many incidents related in this book—such as his offer, in October 1914, to take charge of the combined naval and military forces at Antwerp. But he is not really afflicted with the vanity from which real presumption springs. However truculent his manner, there is a good deal of humility of mind in him. Only difficulties do not exist for him, and everything seems easy, however technical, even the command of combined naval and military forces, because there is nothing, except words, in which he has ever acquired technical accomplishment—certainly not in practical affairs, and not even in a subject so little exacting as history. He is a professional rhetorician, by birth and by career, and his very triumphs in this field account for his failures in others.

The second volume of Mr Churchill's book on the war is an *apologia*. He undertook, as First Lord, to force the Straits. If he had succeeded at Gallipoli, he would have captured Constantinople which has never been taken but once in its long history; destroyed Germany's oriental Ally and brought the whole hesitating East to our side; reached weapons to the unarmed, isolated, and inaccessible Russian giant which was to perish for want of them; and thus, in the first year of the

war, by a single and decisive stroke, made our ultimate victory, which was so long delayed and so long doubtful, certain and perhaps immediate. In this enterprise he failed. The whole purpose of his war book is to justify himself and to show how he was baffled by chance and fate. But, like all apologists, he has the advantage of framing himself the charge he is to meet. With this advantage it is easy for a practised controversialist as he is to clear himself from blame. But the Gallipoli campaign was to be discussed by high military authorities before the end of the war, and as the writer had the advantage of hearing them, he will repeat their criticism.

Operations on the Gallipoli peninsula had long ago been studied by our General Staff and all the plans existed at the War Office: it had been a subject of still closer study by the Greek military authorities. For there they could strike at the heart of their hereditary enemy. The conclusions of both Staffs were the same; an operation if conducted by naval and military forces, acting by surprise, was easy and could hardly fail; under any other conditions it was hardly feasible. Our Navy was in command of the sea; the Greeks were eager to join us and attack in the peninsula with their whole army. The Gallipoli campaign should have succeeded without the loss of a single English soldier.

Mr Churchill, with his usual candour, tells us the Greeks in the early spring of 1915 were anxious to come in on our side, but that the Czar objected. It was very natural for the Greeks to have this

wish, for every one must want to undertake a war with a prospect of assured success. It was also natural for the Russians to object: they could not like to see the Greeks in Constantinople before themselves. But the Czar's objections cannot have been insuperable, or even great, for later in the autumn, when Bulgaria joined the enemy, the Allies begged the Greeks to come in, and even offered them Cyprus if they would do so. Political action should therefore have preceded and prepared the campaign, which should have been amphibious. Mr Churchill, however, began it as an English naval attack; continued it as an enterprise mainly naval and partly military; and finished it as a combined English naval and military campaign.

Mr Churchill's account of the early conduct of the war is thus candid enough to show us the whole system. This system had one general fault, for which perhaps no individual leader, civil, military or naval, could be blamed, and that fault, as long as it existed, must have been what prevented the Allies winning the war. For as long as it lasted, victory seemed inaccessible, though the odds were heavily in their favour, and, as soon as it disappeared, victory was swift and easy, though the numerical odds were then heavily against them. The error, like all errors, was a mistake of emphasis. The value of the general plan was underrated, and this fault continued to haunt and thwart the Allies throughout the war, just as it did the Germans. The actual operations in the peninsula described by Mr Churchill were based, not on one, but on a succession of plans. But the same criticism

applicable to our enterprise in Gallipoli, as related by Mr Churchill, can, almost without a change of a word, be levelled at Ludendorff's campaign of 1918, as related by himself.

He had a choice of plans; chose one to which there were great objections; altered it in the course of execution; and then acted without any clear design at all, but picked up, as they presented themselves to him, one expedient after another in the hope that somehow he might win through.

The victory of the Allies is commonly attributed to unity of command, and this phrase is repeated because it is to the interests of a good many people that it should be accepted as true. But such a thing never existed, as General Bliss, the American Chief of the Staff, has pointed out in writing. Foch never had the right to command at all, but only to advise, and by 1918 things had come to such a pass that both Haig and Petain submitted to the guidance of one mind, which they had never consented to do before they were in such an extremity of peril. Foch not only had a single conception, but a conception of genius, and one so simple that when it is unfolded everyone may wonder how it was never thought of before. Having been a Professor, he likes explaining and he has explained it, and called it the doctrine of a rolling ball. A battle is comparable to a ball rolling down a smooth slope; if it is never stopped, it constantly accelerates its speed as it goes, but, if it is stopped at any particular point, it at once loses the rate of speed it has already acquired, and so may never reach the bottom.

To the dismay both of English and French commanders, Foch, in his victorious attack, never bothered at all about any possible German counter-attack, and secured every advance he had made by at once attacking elsewhere without any pause. If Ludendorff had thought of this he might have won in 1918, and in May and June Foch used to stamp up and down his room, anxiously tugging his moustache and wondering whether Ludendorff "knew his business."

But it is probable that no such discovery of genius was necessary to break down the German resistance in France. If only the various commanders had looked outside their own front, or even their own arm, the outnumbered Germans could never have stood out so long. Only once before 1918 had the Allies fought according to a single idea, that of Nivelle; ill-conceived and unlucky as his plan was, it very nearly defeated the Germans. Some very considerable authorities like General Mangin have maintained that their military situation was worse in May 1917 than at the Armistice.

Mr Churchill's book reveals the evil of haphazard and piecemeal designs. But others, including the Germans, suffered in this way just as much as we did, and ultimate success lay with the Allies because they were the first to correct this error.

So far from being a shortcoming peculiar to ourselves, it was, on the contrary, in London, and by our leaders, civil and military, that the true road was first perceived and strenuously followed during the last period of the war. Not only did they strive for what is called "unity of command,"

but what might more accurately be described as fighting the Germans together in France, instead of separately, as we had so obligingly done for three years, but they were also determined to make politics and war co-operate and not conflict.

In 1915, as Mr Churchill tells us, the Czar objected to the Greek army's participation in the Gallipoli military attack; this aid would have made it succeed without the loss perhaps of a single English life, and our statesmen had not the skill and courage to overcome the Czar's objection. But in 1918, by a single, small move, the expedition to Archangel, they stopped the flow of German troops from Russia, which in the critical days of the summer might have turned the scale against us in France. This clear and constant view of the whole, which prevailed in London from 1917 onwards, as it did nowhere else, is our greatest contribution to the Allied victory.

It has been said that the war was won by "the soldiers and sailors" and not "by the politicians"; this view has gained much currency from being constantly repeated by retired colonels who, having got too old to play games of ball, spend their time denouncing politics and trying to get into them. It is an old illusion, and even our poet knew of it: he also knew men who

> Esteem no act
> But that of hand; the still and mental parts
> That do contrive how many hands shall strike,
> When fitness calls them on, and know by measure
> Of their observant toil the enemy's weight,—
> Why this has not a finger's dignity.

The War Cabinet was created by Mr Lloyd George to direct all our various efforts according to matured and connected plans, and, mistaken as its decisions may often have been, it is to this system that we owe the glorious victories of 1918.

Foch and his school of French commanders held this truth no less clearly in the region of military operations. They were all pupils of General Bonnal, who brought Foch to the French Staff College twenty-five years ago, and whose teaching was summarised in the doctrine that strategy is conception. But, like all truths, this is almost self-evident, for in any human affair it is the policy and method of the managers that counts, far more than the energy and devotion of the subordinates.

It is perhaps because our statesmen are far more men of business than those of the Continent that they found out where the direction of the war was at fault on the side of the Allies, as it evidently was, for we could not win in spite of far superior numbers. So also it was these doctrines of command that kept the mind of Foch obstinately revolving how trench warfare could be ended and the defensive deprived of the advantage it seemed to possess over the attack. He was always convinced that a method existed, and could be found, and his discovery was not fortuitous. His conviction proceeded from what he had learnt and always taught, that to win the battle all that is wanted was the right idea; nothing more, but nothing less. Once found, it was so simple that Foch could direct the Allied armies from the North Sea to the Adriatic,

close on 250 divisions, in one small room with the staff of a Brigadier.

If it is a truism, it is far from being obvious to everybody, as Mr Churchill's book itself shows. Ardent as is Mr Churchill's absorption in all warlike matters, he himself writes as if he was unaware of it. The Gallipoli operations were only a small theatre of the many where the war was being played out. The wisdom of this particular enterprise can only be with justice estimated when the total forces on all these theatres, and their disposition at the time, are also considered. But these facts and figures Mr Churchill does not tell us, nor apparently has he taken the trouble to find them out. In fact, he looks at his own enterprise just as every military and naval commander on both sides always has, either during the war or in any subsequent justification of their actions. He treats his small section of the front as the only front.

Therefore this truism, like many others, is worth repeating, and especially here. For just as military and naval men on the Continent err in one direction, and are rather bookish, so we err in the other direction, and are inclined to treat war as a matter of physical and moral qualities—in fact, as a form of sport, where intellect can be left out of account. When the Expeditionary Force landed at Rouen in August 1914, the French crowd on the quays was astounded to see one regiment land with a pack of hounds. However little inconvenient this prejudice may be in our colonial wars, where not more than a brigade or two is engaged, it is almost disabling when sixty divisions have to be handled, as in 1917.

At least the war taught this truth to our military arm. But perhaps it has not done so to the senior service, which still looks upon its Staff, a new creation, with almost unconcealed contempt. As Mr Churchill's book shows, there was in London no Staff—that is to say mind—either for the Army or the Navy at the beginning of 1915. The Navy did not get one till the third year of the war, and still has no Staff College. Even in the fourth year of the war, when the Supreme Council of the Allies used to ask the Admiralty of the greatest navy in the world for advice, it used to receive memoranda drawn up by a paymaster which were on the level of a schoolboy's essay.

At Gallipoli the obstinate heroism of our men brought us time after time to within an inch of victory; and Mr Churchill, with commanding eloquence, tells us how luck deprived him and them of success. But if they had got through, it would have been due to luck just as much. The expedition was badly planned, and had no right to succeed. It was, as Mr Churchill himself called it, a gamble.

Nevertheless, Mr Churchill can hardly be blamed. The Allied system of war was to have no system at all, and he did what every one else did; if he was not better, he certainly was not worse. But the prize was so great, our efforts were so superhuman, the consequences so disastrous, that Mr Churchill, great as his talents are, may never efface from himself the stigma of this failure.

Mr Churchill's war book records a life's disappointment. For Mr Churchill does not want to be a man of words and a rhetorician, but a man of

acts and a ruler. Yet the Great War, which might have made him, as First Lord, the foremost man in the world, plunged him into insignificance and, though he has recovered, no place exists exalted enough to compensate him for what he might have been. But he must console himself, and reflect that hardly anyone has ever done great things and written fine books. In life a choice must be made. If he did not vindicate the superiority of English fleets to the rest of the world he has asserted the superiority of English letters, and that may give him a higher and more enduring fame.

THE LATE MARQUESS CURZON OF KEDLESTON

LORD CURZON'S CAREER

Lord Curzon in the earlier part of his life erected as monuments of his early travel and political studies large and stately volumes. Like all works which are mainly of information, they are bound at some time to become obsolete, and to be superseded by others. But, however little instructive they may become about the Middle East, the future historian is bound to consult them for the information they contain about their author. The part he has played during the last quarter of a century has been very considerable, and if the unknown future pays any attention to our present (and it may forget it as it forgets almost everything), it will not be able to understand our politics without some study of him.

The character Lord Curzon has always played on the political stage by destiny and by choice can be found in his earlier works, but they hardly make known the actor who has played it as well as this volume does.[1] Here he sits for the most part unbuttoned and at his ease. He has laid aside for the moment the gorgeous robes, the sceptred dignity, and the formal official mask he has always worn both by fortune and by taste.

Some men have been said to be born in the purple.

1 "Tales of Travel," by Lord Curzon of Kedleston. (Hodder & Stoughton.)

This is not true of Lord Curzon, but he may be said to have wrapped himself in it almost immediately. In this book we breathe an air that is almost always princely, and princely with Asiatic and therefore double pomp. Though the papers it contains were written when George Curzon had hardly reached the half-way point of life, his friends, as they appear in it, are an Afghan Ameer, a Persian Shah, a Chinese Viceroy, and an English Prince of Wales. One commoner, it is true, and an English commoner, the late Mr Oscar Browning, figures in the almost royal roll of his acquaintances, as having been Lord Curzon's tutor at Eton. But if that most amiable and kindly of snobs cannot be numbered among the great of this earth, he had become what lawyers call quasi-great by reason of unintermittent pursuit and constant frequentation of them. When Lord Curzon wishes to illustrate the manners of the East, he casually mentions that the people who have furnished him with the experience from which he makes his deductions are "an Asiatic monarch, or a Kurdish chieftain, or a Satrap"; and though this book records the life of a young man, the only ladies of the time whom he mentions are "Georgina, Countess of Dudley, Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland, Lady Warwick, and others whose names I cannot now recall" as "English beauties . . . whom I knew well in England," and leaves the reader speculating whether the other goddesses are left nameless because their beauty shone less brightly, or because their names were not sufficiently exalted to be mentioned in the same breath as a duchess and two countesses.

"It is not so much," he says about the Victoria Falls, "that I hope to succeed where others have failed as that, having penned the following words in the train that took me away from the Zambesi, they may possess the slight merit of a vivid and unblurred impression." That merit, which is by no means slight, is the very merit of this book. It gives a vivid and unblurred impression of one of the leading statesmen of our time, and of the constant elevation at which Lord Curzon has spent his life. It was without doubt his desire and intention to do so. But this book, like his earlier and more ponderous works, almost establishes his right to such a lofty desire fulfilled. For if his association with the great is so very precocious, it must be set down to a motive far stronger than the pleasure of their company. He was evidently determined to learn their business, which requires special accomplishments just as peculiar as those of any other business. Perhaps this industrious study of the ruler's art is written larger on the pages of this book than on any other of his published works, containing as it does, and as the above quotations show, immediate and intimate records, written on the very heels of the event. If the ambition to occupy high office appears very clearly, so also, and even more clearly, does the ambition to be qualified for it.

It may be doubted whether any of all the Englishmen who have ever sat on the Viceregal throne of India has ever prepared himself for the task with such religious care, or submitted himself to such a prolonged novitiate. Lord Curzon's

passion for travel is natural, deep and genuine. "The joy of travel," he writes, "while it is being pursued, lies in a good many things . . . but I think that even more does it consist in the half tangible but still positive memories that it leaves. One can make friends with places as with people; and an hour, even a minute's experience, in one spot may be more precious than a sojourn of months in another. These are the intimacies that survive and constitute a perpetual endowment. With them we can always solace the hours whether of idleness or gloom." But even this passion was bent to the uses of his self-imposed training, for his travels always have our Eastern Empire as a centre. The American Continent is almost entirely, the Australasian totally, ignored. There are occasional references to Korea or Japan or Tunis: but they are treated as being on the circumference of a circle of which Delhi is the centre; the nearer he gets to that centre the more thorough and intimate his journeys become. As a guest he visits the Ameer ruling over Afghanistan, the glacis of India; resides in Mesopotamia and Persia; and explores that unknown Central Asia into which the Czar's armies were then advancing with so menacing an aspect. He was not one of those dilettante travellers who try to fill the vacancy of a wealthy life by visiting everything and seeing nothing and sauntering idly over the world along an avenue of hotels which are all identical except that they lie in different parts of the earth. He approached each place and each person only after a course of study pursued with that tireless application which

has always made Lord Curzon the wonder of his colleagues in the Cabinet. When he visited Napoleon's house at St Helena, he found himself better informed than the professional guide. "I had made a careful study of every available work about the Emperor's residence in that island, having indeed provided myself with a miniature library for that purpose . . . The Consul, observing that I seemed to have a greater acquaintance with the house than himself, very courteously asked me to take the company round, which I proceeded to do, explaining with sufficient fullness the purpose to which each apartment had been put, and the furniture it contained. Thus I acted as guide in a house which I had previously never seen."

This voracious appetite for work, surprising in a young man, persisted in advanced years when it is perhaps still more astonishing. In no career could it have gone unrewarded with some measure of success, however unfavourable were the opportunities. But in Lord Curzon's long administrative labours this unsparing and unceasing industry was perhaps the most valuable quality he could possess; and he started on his course with every advantage of birth that his grand purpose required. He always aimed high; and, though early circumstances had placed him in a position to aim well and truly, he exerted himself to the utmost to hit the mark. Nothing was left to chance. Though fortune had always smiled on him as one of her most darling children, he always behaved as if he was to live on her frowns. The actor is now coming to the end of his part, chosen in early

life with such fixed determination, sustained with a dignity approaching to magnificence, and crowned with a success which, if not invariable, has yet been very great. There seems nothing left, before such a well-graced player leaves the stage, but to cover him with the applause and the flowers he has so well deserved, and, on his departure, to remember him as an example to his class and a model servant of the State.

Yet this volume, most of which was composed by Lord Curzon in his prime, compels the reader to speculate whether the road he marked out so early, and followed so persistently, was the right road for him to take, though he has reached the end so triumphantly. The part for which he cast himself in the drama has been played with sureness and finish. But another part might have suited the talents of the actor much better. Lord Curzon chose to become a man of affairs; public affairs indeed, and without any object of personal profit, but still affairs. Yet from this book, where he reveals himself as he hardly does in works of greater scope, it would rather seem as if Nature had endowed him with the talents of a man of letters, and that he did violence to her intentions in becoming a politician.

He is never likely to display his mind more clearly than in this volume. There it shows itself with both the qualities and defects of a writer, and when a man has both the virtues and the peculiar faults required by an occupation he may fairly be said to be predestined to it.

This mistaken direction is, in England, not un-

common in men of Lord Curzon's class. For that class, being largely, if not wholly territorial, has great public spirit and is at the same time very rustic in its outlook. The only field of achievement it really recognises as fit for the human spirit is Parliament, and thought and art, if not applied in this region, hardly exist for it. Its more gifted members—and they are neither more nor less numerous than in any other class—are born into an atmosphere where politics are regarded as the only pursuit worthy of them, and they yield to the current. If their gifts are literary, they bend their talents to this practical purpose.

This must have been the fate of Lord Curzon; but literary he was born, and literary he remains. This disposition asserts itself everywhere in this book, and most forcibly in his sensitiveness to the outward beauty of Nature, of which he is aware, and which is proved far more conclusively by the felicity of his descriptions than by his own declarations. For example, a coast town of Tripoli: "The little town of Susa, which lay in its glittering garb of whitewash—houses, walls and roofs, all drenched and crusted with the same unmitigated and blinding hue—looking like some great sea-mew preening its snowy plumage along the shore." Nightfall at the statue of Memnon in Egypt: "Blacker and larger each moment the figures become, their monstrous shadows thrown forward upon the lake till at length even the afterglow has faded, and, still as death themselves, they fitly preside over the deathly stillness of the southern night." The Victoria Falls on the Zambesi: "From left to

right and from right to left we can walk along the near side of the chasm from end to end, save at the point of exit, and gaze at the falls immediately opposite, as though we were gazing at some showman's panorama and were looking across an intervening hollow, devised to assist the illusion, at the painted canvas beyond. Only here is no artificial picture, but the living masterpiece of a more human showman; tangible, because the scud of the spray storm lashes in the face; throbbing with movement, because in our ears is the rattle of the eternal thunder." Or Japan: "Among the most fair and fanciful of cities is Kioto, the ancient seat of the Empire and capital of Japan; for a thousand years it was the cage whose gilded bars immured the unseen but sacred person of the Mikado. Within the blind walls of the palace enclosure the royal *Fainéant* dawdled away in a linnet-like existence." Or the waters of Babylon: "There occurs that wonderful interlude before sundown—a time, half of mystery, half of sadness —when the day passes through its death throes and prepares for dissolution. In the tranquil radiance the riverside villages are redeemed from the filth and squalor of the day, and assume a fleeting beauty that has in it something of the divine. A bluish vapour rises from the broad river bosom, and swathes the banks with a filmy kerchief. The pitchy hulls of the big one-masted boats, moored along the shore, tremble inverted in the glassy current."

To this sense of beauty is added another, hardly less keen, that of humour, which bubbles up so

constantly in this book that, if it had to be classified, it might most appropriately be put under that heading. One section of it is indeed called by Lord Curzon himself "humours of travel."

But, if both these senses exist, they only survive in an undeveloped form. A generation of official life has stunted them, and they can only have escaped entire atrophy by their great original vivacity. The transaction of official business requires the suppression of the feelings; literature demands their free and frequent expression, and in this conflict literary talent is bound to suffer. The pressure to which they have been subjected by this official necessity has left a curious mark on Lord Curzon's language. It has almost been distorted by this habit of formal politeness, and taught so carefully to avoid the ugly facts of life that it cannot even speak them. Suicide becomes a "melancholy catastrophe." Instead of saying "the philosopher's biographer did not speak the truth," he says with circumlocution "the philosopher is not to be congratulated upon these practical testimonials to the veracity of his Boswell." When he wants to remark, "he would have killed me," he puts it in this way: "he would have dealt with me in a manner which would have prevented this anecdote from being written."

Yet the taste for writing has never been eradicated, though it has found little exercise except in official documents. It is perhaps from this love, and not from any laborious disposition, that his unintermittent and unconscionable industry has grown, which keeps him two-thirds of the day at

his desk, and compels him to draft with his own hand a multitude of documents usually left by a Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to subordinates. He works in order to write, and does not write in order to work.

But the æsthetic grain of his natural genius appears in another and stranger fashion in this book. If he has the gifts of a literary mind he also has its defects. It would be going too far to accuse his logical and analytical powers of weakness, yet they are at least disproportionate to his artistic capacity, and at times strangely and unexpectedly trivial. He does not seem to be aware of the real weight of fact, and is ready to attribute importance to things both infinitesimal and irrelevant. The interest in Napoleon's house and furniture, already referred to, is an instance of this, and appears at times in an even more ludicrous form, as in the careful record and solemn recitation of the figures, how high and how broad those waterfalls were of which he has composed such beautiful descriptions. Like a true artist he has a brain that is little scientific, and it is perhaps only his obstinate tenacity that has overcome a certain superficiality of mind. His is not the intellect that can understand and unloose those baffling knots which alone test the highest statesmanship, and it is to be noted that his administration both in Asia and Europe, has been marked rather by the efficient transaction of regular tasks than by those inspired and profound measures that divert the courses of a nation's history.

But such criticisms are really ungracious, because

these flaws only make his achievement in life more creditable. Nature must have intended him, as these early, careless, fugitive papers suggest, to be something of a Pierre Loti and something of a Mark Twain. He was cutting against the grain when he carved himself into a successor of Clive and Warren Hastings; yet he ruled their Empire with distinction, if not with their memorable feats, and most Englishmen would applaud his choice, and consider that he chose the better part.

VISCOUNT CECIL OF CHELWOOD

LORD ROBERT CECIL AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The critics of the League of Nations incur great risks. For Lord Hugh Cecil has called them "disreputable," and Lord Robert Cecil a "heathen rout."

Lord Hugh, therefore, does not admit they are gentlemen, and condemns them to social ostracism. Lord Robert goes further, and will not allow they are Christians and sentences them to a sort of religious excommunication. If Lord Salisbury does not join in and pronounce a third and still more tremendous anathema it must be that there are no further and fiercer curses left.

Too much of the life of these brothers has been spent on Olympus for them to escape the Olympian tone. Their father, the late Lord Salisbury, was a Jove whose nod shook and ruled our public affairs. He was a man who never, even in his adolescence, had been anything but disillusioned, and he appears so even in the biography written by a loving and partial daughter. His first experience of the world had been too cruel: he had suffered diabolical persecution and hellish torments at Eton, only because he was a boy of superior and sensitive intelligence. Even in his adolescence, therefore, in the period of illusions, he had none about his

fellow-men; and an early entry and triumphant career in public life were hardly calculated to give him a great admiration for human nature, which does not shine at its noblest and brightest in such a sphere, and perhaps less in his time than in any other. To high literary powers he joined an acute scientific intellect; his mind had an ornate and elegant subtlety which is stamped on his Foreign Office minutes, and makes them models of their kind. He thus stood quite alone in a circle which, being both parliamentarian and Victorian, must have touched the very lowest depth of human dulness. On his own side there was nothing for him but the heavy Conservative squires of the Commons, and their still heavier neighbours, wafted by the tide of Victorian prosperity into the Lords. The dinners of these supporters had poisoned Peel, both physically and morally, and brought premature ruin on his health and spirits. Lord Salisbury never could bend to associate with people so uncongenial. Much of his dislike of Disraeli was disdain of the transparent pretences and gross arts used by him to manage and conciliate this class. His fastidious spirit was still further repelled by Liberalism, either in its members, who worshipped God and Mammon with equal zeal, assigning to Mammon the inward service and leaving God to content Himself with the outward professions; or in its leader, Gladstone, who founded the great tradition since observed by many of his followers and successors with such pious fidelity, in public to speak the language of the highest and strictest principle, and in private to pursue and possess every

sort of woman. Just as the saints and sages of old escaped from the world into the wilderness, he fled from this crowd into his laboratory; "that damned laboratory" as it was called by the only man ever reckless enough to challenge him, Lord Randolph Churchill, who suspected not unwisely that something of political use was to be got inside there which could not be found in restaurants and race-courses, and which therefore put him at a disadvantage. Lord Salisbury thought men were a poor lot, and therefore that one was not much better than the other. It never seems to have mattered to him who he appointed to what place, and he filled every public post with his friends and relations; for all being equal, and equally likely to carry out their duties with credit, there was no reason why he should not indulge his predilections. His rule was thus open to the charge of jobbery and nepotism; but, if he was unfair, it was from indifference only. At one period nearly every one at the Hatfield breakfast table must have been either in the Government or connected with it. Into this air his children were born and bred; brought up in Olympus, they speak with Olympian authority. But their achievement can hardly justify their tone; they began at the very top and, as they approach the end of their career, they find themselves not much more than half-way up.

In every question in which these three form an opinion, it is invariably dangerous to take the other side. A famous orator once claimed that he was on the side of the angels. Such a position is too subordinate and undignified for the Cecils. In

their case it is the angels who have to be on their side. For the same reason, only the wicked can differ from these brothers, and any critic of the League can only speak from moral turpitude. Yet even in face of this danger some observations must be risked.

The originators and promoters of the League, like President Wilson or Lord Robert Cecil, are often called idealists, even by adversaries of the League, who, therefore, are content to deplore their noble folly. They have not been slow to wear a title which crowns them with a moral superiority.

They do not, however, ask men, as idealists would, to avoid future wars by choosing Governments more courageous, far-seeing and enlightened than they have hitherto done. On the contrary, they propose to dispense them from this inevitable duty and effort by the creation of elaborate juridical devices. They are not, therefore, idealists, but formalists, who assure mankind it can escape the evil of war by the force of formalities. Their doctrines are the natural offspring, not of superior, but of legal and academic minds.

Previous Peace Conferences had settled Europe definitely, and then gone home, and there had been an end of it. They roughly cut the knots they could not untie, and preferred immediate peace and quiet to the search for a perfect solution. But the Peace Conference of 1919 considered that, given sufficiently complicated machinery, there was no evil, not even war, that could not be abolished. So it never concluded its labours, but spawned a huge fry of institutions similar to itself but smaller:

Assemblies, Councils, Conferences, Commissions and Tribunals, each with a jurisdiction and procedure of its own.

But all this machinery, though imposing enough when insignificant matters were at stake, collapses and is swept aside when real passions, like national passions, are aroused. For mankind cannot find salvation in rules and regulations, nor escape the task of choosing leaders fitted for their task.

Lord Grey, also an enthusiast for the League, though without the self-righteousness of the Cecils, has constantly adjured the world in general, and the Dominions Premiers in particular, to assist it.

But Lord Grey's own appeals exhibit at least one defect almost certain to lead to a conflict in a crisis such as occurred in 1914, whatever juridical contrivances exist. With all their solemn benevolence they are muddled both in thought and expression. He was not otherwise in 1914; so much so, that on August 1 his words made the Kaiser think we were coming in, not against, but for Germany.

Lord Robert, when in the House of Commons, used to fall into a frenzy almost epileptic if anyone doubted the virtues of the League, and denounce them as the partisans of war; this is very like denouncing those who doubt the virtues of a medicine as partisans of disease. War, like disease, is an evil, sometimes but not always avoidable by prudence, foresight, and courage; neither war nor disease are likely to disappear from the universe till evil itself does.

These formalists at the conference were blinded

by many fallacies but especially by the error rooted in almost all of them, and conspicuously in Lord Robert Cecil, that they were much better than other beings on this earth, and therefore certain to be right.

But other people, acting in conjunction with them, were, like Mr Lloyd George, not formalists but realists, and as quick to perceive as to clutch the main chance. President Wilson at the Peace Conference cared for nothing but his League paraphernalia, and was indifferent to all else put in the Treaty, or in what shape it got there, as long as his darling toys, Covenant, Council and Assembly were included. He was, therefore, as helpless as an infant in the dandling and managing arms of Mr Lloyd George and our Foreign Office, who took the candy from the child and left him with the empty box, shouting with joy.

The League, as it left President Wilson's hands, and in full action, could not be other than an instrument of English influence. If it had ever become operative, it would have given us an almost irresistible leverage in every great international dispute. Hence the almost universal rebuff it has suffered, and the rejection or disregard of it by all States except small countries like Sweden or Uruguay, who welcome an otherwise unattainable opportunity of addressing the world about events like a quarrel between the Powers.

Though it was in America that the conception of the League originated, and still finds the greatest support, the American people rejected it more immediately and emphatically and ostentatiously

than anyone else, and for this very reason, as they openly proclaimed. We may shut our eyes to it if we please, but it is grossly and palpably evident to every one else that the League is a British firm, however magnificent and universal the name under which it trades.

Our Latin Allies perceived the real nature of the League just as clearly, though it was to them only another and bewildering example of the strange Anglo-Saxon inconsistency by which high-flown and disinterested professions often go with very positive and hard-headed practice.

The opposition between their direct and implacable frankness, which we call cynicism, and our romantic and decorous delicacy, which they call insincerity, extends to other matters than high politics. Their habit of mentioning the unmentionable is to us corrupt and immoral, and our savage tabu of some quite natural subjects is to them falsely modest and hypocritical.

The Latins, therefore, accepted the League from necessity and politeness. They were then dependent on the Anglo-Saxons, and they were too courteous to object if we wished the fate of the Aland Islands or the question of cocaine traffic to be entrusted to this new machinery.

Yet when their vital interests are at stake, as in the valley of the Rhine or the Adriatic, they are strictly business-like and will no more allow Uruguay or Sweden to intervene than we would give small peoples a voice in the settlement of Ireland or Egypt.

In a quarrel that arose in 1923 between Italy

and Greece, Lord Robert Cecil, being then himself at Geneva, tried to bring the matter within the jurisdiction of the League, but failed. Lord Grey, discussing this abortive intervention, declared that another discomfiture such as the League then sustained may shatter it, or, in his own amorphous language, "bring us all to the final parting of the ways."

But the partisans of the League, like himself, may always expect a shower of derision from the Latin nations. President Wilson and Lord Robert Cecil gave to the League a long and pompous charter in the Treaty of Versailles, but it will have to content itself with the brief and plain constitution given to it on this occasion by Mussolini. He has declared its sole right is to be absurd.

In speaking for the League on this occasion Lord Grey, in his confused, involuntary way, brought forward the strongest of all arguments against it. He declared it must be ineffective in Europe if we and the French do not co-operate. But if we did, it would not be necessary, for not a shot could be fired in Europe without our joint permission. So it must always be the fate of the unhappy League to be either useless or superfluous. If the Great Powers all agree, as they might very well have done in 1914 but for the indecision, vacillation and hesitation of Lord Grey and his Liberal colleagues, there would have been no war; if some of the Powers do not or cannot be compelled to agree by the others, no bonds or parchments will hold them from fighting.

MR. J. H. THOMAS

MR THOMAS AND IMPERIALISM

Mr Thomas, who was Colonial Secretary in the Labour Government of 1924, is certainly a most remarkable convert. During his term of office he took every opportunity to assure the public that he was not what they supposed him to be. His professions of contrition were unceasing. On every public occasion that presented itself he beat a repentant breast, the plumpness of which was not diminished by the severity of his spiritual pangs. At Derby and Newport and elsewhere he told the suspicious burgesses of this country that he was very far from holding the views on our Empire that were attributed to him; he was no longer what he was; he was saved; the old Labour Adam had been cast out, and the days of backsliding were over.

Formerly, the very name of the British Empire was abhorrent to him, and he wrote books denouncing and deriding it. But once in office, all was changed. He attended patriotic orgies side by side with the Duke of Devonshire. While that solemn nobleman struck the Imperialist drum with a majestic slowness suitable to his exalted rank, the new convert, Mr Thomas, abandoned himself to an ecstasy of jingo enthusiasm, and, shaking his political tambourine, sang "Glory,

glory to our Army." Rule Britannia had become the hymn of his choice, and he gave it out with pious gusto; his former anathema, the British Empire, had become his favourite text, and he preached from it with all the fervour of a Welsh evangelist.

Derby was the place he chose to testify, in the company of his new-found ducal brother, against his former political sinfulness. What agonies of mind he must have endured as he passed Chatsworth on his way there! How severely his conscience must have pricked him as he surveyed the splendid pile! With what bitterness must he have reproached himself as he lay back on his cushions, for ever having disturbed in his unregenerate days its ducal owner, now his public associate, and vexed him with apprehensions of a revolution and a red terror.

These patriotic professions, made when in office, were the direct opposite of those made out of office by Mr Thomas. To most people, therefore, it would seem that he had suffered a change into something rich and strange—only relatively rich perhaps, but exceedingly strange. Mr Thomas, however, did not think so. He holds a new and peculiar doctrine, and, as he has twice expounded it on a public platform, it must be treated, not as a slight, chance idea, but as a considered and fixed opinion.

According to this original thinker, a politician can allow himself two sets of ideas: one suitable for out of office wear, which Mr Thomas calls "mere propaganda," and the other reserved for Cabinet use "and the responsibilities of Govern-

ment," where a man, as he puts it, must "face the facts." In this system of casuistry, the facts (so says this new moralist) are of no account on a given subject till "a man faces the problem." Till then they are not worthy of notice, and Mr Thomas asserted very calmly that he had had no particular regard for them during this preliminary period. So he told the Chamber of Trade of Newport: "I once," he said, "wrote a book 'When Labour rules.' It was a foolish thing to do; it was in the days when I was bothered about material things and wanted the money," and he repudiated any intention of ever acting when in power according to the views he had held when out of it.

This was a subtle and perhaps an over-refined interpretation of his public conduct. Stripped, however, of its ingenious construction, the "propaganda" of Mr Thomas amounts to saying what suits you when it suits you. Blunt people use a harsher and a shorter word.

Labour, however, has not one mouth, but two, and from the other of these there issued a voice as raucous as Mr Thomas was mellifluous.

Mr Jack Jones remained a mere member of Parliament; he therefore had got no further than the propaganda stage out of which Mr Thomas passed when he burst from the grubby chrysalis of an agitator to flutter so brilliantly as a Cabinet Minister. Mr Jones is distinguished for having introduced into the House of Commons a diction for which the speeches of Burke were certainly not a model. But the rules of that Chamber

checked the full and free play of his eloquence; in Glasgow, however, he could unpack his heart. In the course of a speech which he made there about the same time that Mr Thomas was fraternising with the Duke of Devonshire, he referred to Mr Churchill with his usual elegance of style, as "Mr Brimstone Churchill"; upon which a Bolshevist friend in the audience attempted a definition of Mr Churchill by shouting "he is the biggest rogue in society." Mr Jones, whose mind is as exact as it is gracious, could not accept this formula without qualification, and he preferred to define him as "the tool of rogues who get political prostitutes to fight for them."

If these are the terms applicable to anyone as progressive as Mr Churchill, it must be difficult to frame in labour language a correct description of so inveterate a Tory as the Duke of Devonshire. Probably, if challenged, Mr Jack Jones would abandon the attempt as surpassing his powers, and admit his vocabulary was not ample enough.

But, on this occasion, filling his lungs with the invigorating air of Glasgow he told his audience that the class to which Mr Churchill belonged "had pinched everything from them" except their vote. Mr Thomas at Newport and Mr Jones in Glasgow were hardly in harmony. Mr Jones was still very far from "the facts" which Mr Thomas discovered on taking office; he is evidently still lost in "propaganda."

Till it can obtain a real majority, and with it real power, Labour will speak with two voices, one that of Mr Jones, and the other of Mr Thomas. It

cannot do otherwise in office as long as it depends on opponents as much as supporters. Mr Thomas has the ponderous and perfidious bonhomie which is the professional equipment of the Trade Union official. Perhaps for this reason he caught the favour of the public better than any member of his company, better even than Mr MacDonald. But he may find himself with rivals for the popular favour; others may prove as adaptable.

Just after his fall, Mr Thomas, speaking with a pathos that was not unreal, described the scene in his home after the adverse vote, and the dismay when it was known that the salary of five thousand a year had come to an end. The golden beams had ceased to shine. Perhaps to their genial warmth were due the transformations through which Mr Thomas had passed. Without them he might never have spread his gaudy wings, brilliantly emblazoned with the bright colours of the Union Jack, but, like Mr Jones, have remained morosely enveloped in his sordid sheath of social discontent. The political system has raised him from an engine cleaner into a Cabinet Minister. Perhaps this was the most decisive of all the facts that changed him. If so, even the conversion of Mr Jones is not beyond hope. There is an easy, but unfortunately an expensive, way of lifting him out of the propaganda condition which makes him so irritable. But he may yet rise to the higher state reached by Mr Thomas. The light of a Cabinet salary may yet burst upon him, and reveal the truth.

MR EDWIN MONTAGU AND INDIA

India, though commonly spoken of as a country, is indeed a continent, where lives a calculable fraction of the entire human race. Though at present ruled by Western Europeans, many of its civilisations existed in full splendour when they were still savages, dressed in skins and living in caves. It is still the most important part of our Empire: for though we hope and expect other portions of it to grow to the same wealth and numbers, they have not yet done so. Their greatness is prospective; India's greatness is actual. Its acquisition is the highest of our achievements. Whatever feats this country may come to perform in other continents, Asia has up till now been the scene of its greatest action, which was the conquest of India. Elsewhere other nations of Europe, overrunning and absorbing weak and more primitive races, have done deeds fully as splendid as our own. But none has subjugated any of the ancient, massive, and indestructible civilisations of Asia. Its English conquerors were of more than human power, for they carried on their vast enterprise as private individuals, obstructed and not supported by the resources of their own State. Their energy was without scruple, but in their crimes, as in their virtues, they towered

above ordinary men, so that even those who denounced and detested them were staggered by their courage and capacity. It was with the spoils that they brought back from India that we founded on this island the first modern industrial community: it was the treasure they poured on us which furnished the capital to build our modern world of factories and railroads. The wealth of India created that economic system which has quadrupled our population in a century. The successors of these early adventurers were as unselfish and beneficent as they had been avaricious and destructive, and the good of the nineteenth more than cancelled the evil of the eighteenth century. The administration built up by them is still a model how one race should govern another separate from itself and of inferior strength. The exact probity, devoted zeal, and unfailing skill of our Civil Service has never been questioned even by those who in these days have wished to supersede it. But our people are northern and India's races are subtropical; Nature debars us and them from fusing into one people. India remains the elephant, and we are the mahouts who ride him. This driver is bound to tend the welfare of his charge, and to direct him in his own interests, but to carry out these duties he must be prepared when required to use his heels and his iron hook.

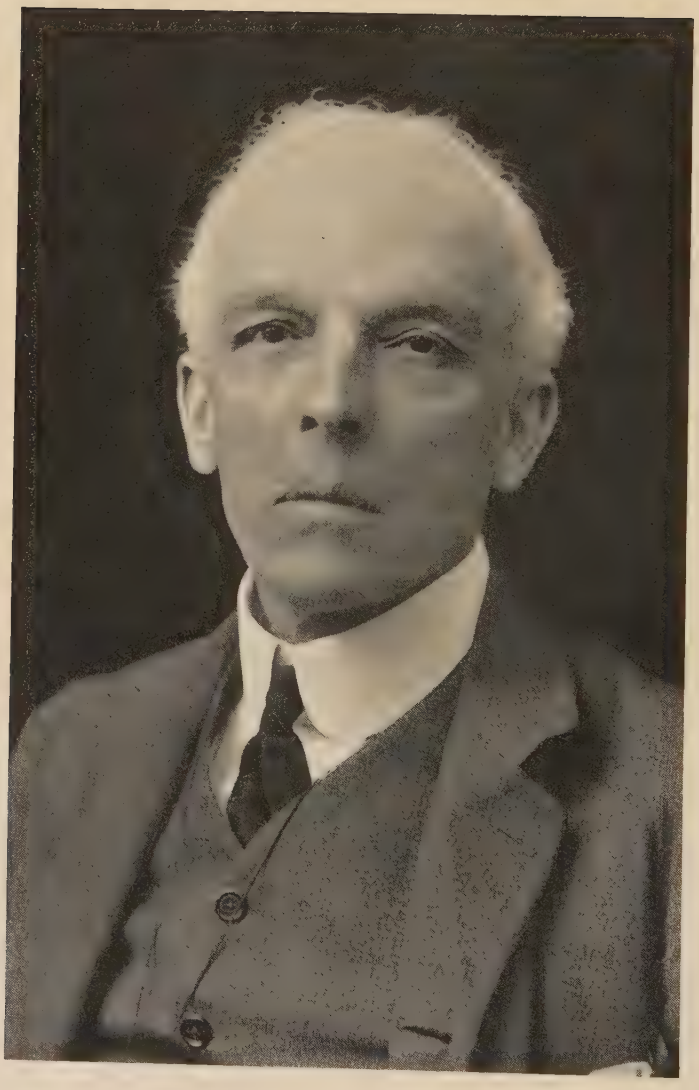
Rather more than forty years ago there was born in London the son of a banker. His name was Edwin Montagu. His youth was bare of all scholastic and academic distinction. He never

acquired any business experience of any sort. He never shone, or even engaged in any profession. He has never given to the world any works of speculation or art. Owing to his inherited wealth it happened that he was able to enter politics very early, but he did not bring to them any of that tried worldly ability and previous success which are even more esteemed there than gifts of speech. Once in the Parliamentary field he never gave any proofs of eloquence, but remained not more than just intelligible. Presumably by the practice of an assiduous obsequiousness to Mr Asquith, and still more to Mrs Asquith,[1] or perhaps for a still less creditable reason, he was at an early age promoted Secretary of State for India. But like many others, he only reached the front rank to make manifest he was unfit to be placed there. On a question arising about certain disciplinary measures against an officer in India, he was criticised in a debate in the House of Commons. But before this merely verbal attack in these secure precincts, his physical courage forsook him. Terror prevented him pleading a case in which he was probably right, and the House beheld with contempt and disgust the Secretary of State swaying with fear at the table, almost inarticulate, his face pale and distorted to hideousness by the disgraceful fit. Soon after he was detected and exposed in a piece of political trickery and asked to resign his office by the Prime Minister. In spite of all his advantages of wealth and office he also failed to secure re-election from a constituency as soon as they had got to

[1] See the Asquith Autobiography.

know him. Thus ejected from politics, he took to business, and even there with every help that birth, means, and business connections can give, he was never thought qualified to fill anything but subordinate and insignificant posts, where he acquitted himself, if without discredit, yet at least without distinction.

During his tenure of office, Edwin Montagu, who had almost collapsed on the floor of the House because unkind things were being said to him, undertook to undo the work of Clive and Warren Hastings. With a few crude ideas about elective institutions picked up in undergraduates' bebating societies, and after a short tour in the East, he tried to alter from top to bottom the mighty structure of our Indian Government. His Reforms have shaken it to its base, and it is now swaying to and fro: we do not yet know whether it will not topple over altogether. So what in the past has baffled the master minds of Eastern statecraft, Nana Sahib, Tippoo Tib, Hyder Ali; what could not be done by the most desperate efforts of entire fighting races, inured to centuries of conquest and domination, Sikh and Mahratta chivalry, dusk faces in glittering mail of steel, seas of charging cavalry breaking in wave after wave on our dauntless fiery few; what the great Napoleon himself reached out after but could not attain was yet accomplished in our day by the late Mr Edwin Montagu.



LORD DARLING

LORD DARLING AND THE LAW

The European world is divided between two systems of law, the English and the Roman, and differing as they do in many ways, in nothing do they differ so much as in their method of choosing judges. Here, and in America, they are taken from the Bar, and in most cases they have been highly successful advocates. It is not till a man has grown a large and successful practice as a barrister and reaped the profits for a number of years, that he is promoted to the Bench, which he looks upon as a pillow on which to rest himself after years of arduous toil.

But under other systems of law than ours, judges and advocates form two classes, each of which is entirely separate from the other. Judges have never pleaded, and advocates never become judges.

Our system has many advantages, but the success of Sir Charles Darling on the Bench may well make us reflect that it may have certain drawbacks as well, for he was never a successful advocate, though an extremely adroit politician, and there was even some outcry on his appointment for this reason. His practice as a barrister had been small; in London it hardly existed at all, and, though more considerable on circuit, even there it consisted largely of defending poachers, and cases of a similar

kind, which are sometimes sensational, but rarely lucrative.

There are in London a few firms of solicitors whose patronage stamps a man as being in the first class; he never secured their support, nor were his briefs ever marked with those fantastic figures which make the mouths of fellow-practitioners water. He cannot, therefore, be called a great success at the Bar. But he was a great success as a judge, and turned out to be one of the very best.

The public fastened on him the reputation of a jester and a wit, and thus hit upon the secret of his success, in its groping uncertain way, as the public sometimes does. Yet the world, or rather the reporters who fed it with the news of his Court, missed his best *mots*, which were rather too delicate for their palate. Once, for example, in a trial for libel, where the plaintiff happened to be a barrister, it was given in evidence that one of the defendants had said that the plaintiff "was without visible means of support"; on which Mr Justice Darling remarked: "Isn't that another way of saying he is a barrister?" But this neat stroke only sent a faint ripple through the Court, and remained unquoted in the Press.

His reported witticisms only give a faint idea of his brilliance, and many have been prejudiced against him by what they read in the papers. They may often have wondered how such poor remarks could make people laugh at all. But many things sound funny in a law court which do not sound at all funny out of it, and are even very dull in print. In the dreary desert of dry discussions which often

constitutes a court's business for a long succession of uninterrupted days, the faintest drop of humour relieves and refreshes every one, and is uproariously welcome.

We are justly proud of our Common Law which is the only original system in Europe, for it is the only indigenous system which was able to resist the attack of the Roman Law. In England alone there never was any Reception. Yet popular pride, though justified, is, as often happens, not quite accurately directed. Personal liberty has found such guarantees as it has never been able to find elsewhere and we have proclaimed that we owe this privilege to juries, which was only partly true, and to an early document, Magna Carta, which is altogether untrue. But it is to Common Law procedure, which is altogether peculiar, that we owe this peculiar privilege. By this procedure the investigation of the facts is public, verbal, subject to highly technical rules, and carried out by the parties or their representatives. In Continental procedure, originating as it did in ecclesiastical jurisdiction, this investigation is secret, documentary, and carried out by an officer of the Court with wide discretionary powers. With us the trial is a rigorous piece of public scientific research in which the events are put under a microscopic lens of enormous power. But abroad, the trial, which we deride as a kind of play, is in fact a play. The written evidence has been collected in dossier, and is known, and the Court only wishes to look at the witnesses who have already deposed.

Now, when politics come into play, our Common Law method is far superior. The whole world can hear the case; and strict technical rules prevent the judge, if partial, from confusing or falsifying the issues. Hence all our battles against arbitrary executive power were fought in the Court of the King's Bench. But abroad the investigating magistrate, who is a mere official, examines the witnesses in his private room and can introduce any matter into the dossier he pleases. Hence recurring scandals like the Dreyfus case. But Common Law procedure, it must be added, is unsuited to probing very complicated and delicate matters of business: it is too primitive in its simplicity and harshness. If the countries of English Law are the chosen seats of liberty they are also the happiest of all haunts for financial swindlers. As soon as our economic life ceased to be primitive we had to invent equity procedure which is documentary, discretionary, and, if not secret, at least largely recluse. But even its procedure is inadequate, and tends to be ineffective from its expense. Wealth, if dishonest, has too great an advantage, and during the last generation hardly any financial fraud on the public has been traced and punished unless the perpetrator had failed.

Common Law procedure gives a peculiar character to the English Common Law barrister. The advocate abroad does not thresh out and sift the facts. His duty being to play a part and make speeches, he is a cultured, accomplished, rather literary and histrionic, gentleman. But the duty

of a barrister here is to carry out researches even more rigorous than those of the laboratory, and his main weapon is not oratory but cross-examination. These discussions make him a very tough and penetrating individual, but, like most scientists, quite untouched by the graces.

Such defects have not only affected him, but also the law which he has made as a judge. Clearness and consistency, principle and brevity, harmony and refinement are wanting in it. It is still, in spite of remedial and codifying statutes very much what Cromwell called it, "an ungodly jumble"; a black art, impenetrable to the layman, and when unreformed, as it was in Dickens' day, giving the practitioner an iniquitous advantage over his fellow-men: a thorny, obscure, and perilous thicket which few can approach without losing some of their fleece.

The public was not only right when it treated Sir Charles Darling as a wit, for it thus placed its finger, though not altogether accurately, on the characteristic that distinguished him from his brethren on the Bench. He was a wit because he was a man of general culture, as few, if any, of the Common Law Judges are. Their life has been too absorbed in desiccating legal business, where even the tincture they may have received at school or at a university wears off.

For twenty-five years of their life they have had their being in money and money's worth alone; with a little sport, for they must keep their health; and a good deal of what is called politics, but what is really a mixture of sport and business—sport

because what matters to the lawyer is not ideas but who is going to win, and business because an election may make or unmake him. His own or his party's success may raise him to a peerage, or a chance failure may compel him to accept a County Court Judgeship.

Such prolonged and exclusive absorption in business dulls and darkens the mind, depriving it of its zeal for truth and artistic love of perfection. Most judges are contented with the low standard which was all that was required of them as busy practitioners. As long as they sum up their facts in a workman-like way and do not display ignorance of the law they are content.

But Sir Charles Darling had never been a busy practitioner, and so there always existed in the world other things for him than money, sport, and party politics. He had kept his mind exercised on these other and finer matters, and thus it remained lively and clear, as perhaps it never would have done if the solicitors had rained briefs on him. He was a man of culture as well as being a lawyer, and his wit was only one manifestation of this quality.

But it also raised his whole administration of the law to a higher level. He was determined to reach the truth, and mere summaries of the evidence on either side did not content him. His ingenuity in doing so may be called either diabolical or divine. He nearly always assisted the jury to pierce the cloud of contrary evidence that one party to a suit always throws up, and which is always bewildering to twelve untrained

men unless a highly-trained mind comes to their help. In the same way he gave his judgments all the polish they were capable of receiving, and was admired by that highly critical body, the Bar, as few judges are.

Nor was his fun—as it is with most judges—a mere interruption of the proceedings. It was a check on the nonsense talked by men with a bad case, or the lawyers hired to conduct it, and its fine point often burst the empty bubbles they tried to blow. It is to be regretted that so many of his best witticisms were missed by the Press, and that such a legal Johnson did not find among the regular law reporters of his Court a Boswell.

THE CENTENARY OF BYRON'S DEATH

THERE never has been but one person who could enjoy as they deserve, and to the full, the celebrations of the Byron Centenary, and that person is Byron. Their spectacle would surely have drawn from him another canto of "Don Juan." For those who delight at present to honour him are the very people who banded together to dishonour him during his existence. Leading members of that same respectable world which denounced and hated him, and which would hardly do otherwise if he rose again at the present day in another name and with works adapted to the circumstances of the present age, while he in turn overwhelmed these honest folk with a scalding torrent of derision and contempt such as no English exile has ever poured on his fellow-countrymen.

The preparations sounded like stanzas of "Don Juan," drained of their champagne effervescence and gone into flat and vapid prose. The most ancient of our daily papers devoted several columns, on the anniversary of his death, to a panorama of Byron's libertinage. It enumerated with careful exactitude all the fair creatures identified as having been the diversion of his life before his marriage, and its consolation after this experiment had failed.

It drew up a sort of skeleton outline of his career, in which was marked every month of each year when a new sultana had been chosen, and a fallen favourite discarded. In the next column to this strange eventful history it announced that "two hundred and fifty representatives of politics, literature, and science" intended to lunch together in order to express their admiration for him. The names of twenty-five prospective guests were given, and even in this small advance-guard the names of two Anglican bishops were to be found. It was Lord Ernle who assembled the chiefs of the Philistines to worship the bitterest enemy they have ever had, and there would have been the best of reasons for urging on him not to omit from his list the President of the Duty and Discipline Movement or the Secretary of the Vigilance Society, or any other of the austere gentlemen who exert themselves to keep the national temperature at a low, safe level, well below the hectic and perilous point at which Byron chose to live. The reason is (and there could be no better) that if Byron had invented a scene so congenial to his satirical fancy he would certainly not have omitted these worthies, and no doubt would have entrusted to one of them the task of submitting the toast of himself. An invitation by Lord Ernle to them would have been more in the true Byronic spirit than most of the ceremonies supposed to glorify and exalt the dead poet. They were, however, forgotten.

Lord Ernle, having been a don, could naturally go further than ordinary man in humourless solemnity; no less naturally he was surpassed in this scholastic

foible by a schoolmaster. Byron's nuptial chamber should be to those who know about him a chamber of horror, and to those who admire him the place above all others they would wish to forget. During the year of common life which began there, he not only exercised on his wife all the indignities of systematic infidelity, but over it still lies the shadow of that dark secret, unmentionable but indubitable, with which she ultimately avenged herself and drove him into exile. One of the commemorative ceremonies was a lunch given in this very room, presided over by an honest schoolmaster. Such candour seems beyond the reach of even Byron's irony, satanic as it often was. Its mixture of gruesomeness and simplicity would certainly, if it could reach his ears, move him to peals of diabolical laughter. To give a finishing touch of the ludicrous, these innocents, many of whom were no doubt trusting and ingenuous youths, carried their enthusiasm to its highest pitch by examining the register which records Byron's sordid, soiled, and accursed marriage.

When Lord Ernle's "two hundred and fifty representatives of politics, literature and science" assembled, they formed a body which might be called the backbone of the country, as supporting the heavy weight of all its great practical tasks, and of all their strenuous drudgery and dulness. If asked, no doubt these moralists from the Episcopal bench, bores from the Treasury Bench, eminent Civil servants, diplomatic grandees, editors of family periodicals and other prominent citizens, would answer that in Byron they forgot the

profligate to honour the poet. They would no doubt make this profession in all sincerity, but nevertheless it cannot be accepted. For to lunch together, and even to pronounce public eulogies, is no more the right way to honour a poet than it is to honour a saint.

Their predecessors a hundred years ago, the worldly respectable, utterly rejected the poet in Byron as well as the man. The solid middle class never, indeed, was aware in his own day of his real character; it was only known in his own aristocratic society, which in those days revolved in a very separate orbit and only avoided and ignored him when his excesses passed even their extensive bounds. The general public did not know of his behaviour, and only learnt what his life had been from posthumous revelations, and especially from his own incomparable letters, where he exhibits his profligacy in such unashamed nudity. In his own time, "the representatives of politics, literature and science" objected to his works, and we have his own authority for saying that they would not admit his masterpiece, "Don Juan," into their houses; if they had come together at his death, as they do at its anniversary, it would have been to burn what he had written. Their objections were, according to their own rules of life, well-founded, and they shrank from many of Byron's poems as they fell from the press, because they read them as poems, and so received the full shock of their meaning. But their successors at the present time receive no shock because his volumes have ceased to be poetry and he a poet.

His works are classics, to be treated with reverence but without curiosity, and rather bought than read. Byron himself is no longer a man but a British institution, of which we are both proud and uncritical, so that even his amours have become respectable, and grave papers enumerate his female victims with the same precision as they set out the points in the Prime Minister's speech. Byron and his works have become part of the national heritage, to which we all are deeply attached; his writings are like the Thirty-nine Articles, accepted without question, but left unread and unintelligible, and he himself has become like the British Museum, unvisited and unknown, but sufficiently venerable to dignify all that is in it, however shocking some of its contents might be elsewhere. It is for this reason that the admirals and bankers who toasted him at Lord Ernle's lunch can lift their glasses without scruple, as they could not a hundred years ago. They can indulge their enthusiasm because its object is really meaningless.

Yet gastronomy is a strange and mistaken homage to offer a poet. For he writes to move the world as he himself was moved, and not to act as a condiment. The real way to celebrate him is to experience his words, good or bad, with joy or with disgust; for he had a meaning when he spoke, and he intended to convey it. Those who grasp what he intended to say and hate it honour him more than those who do not trouble to listen but applaud it. So his contemporaries, who abhorred Byron's books, paid him a higher and more precious homage, than their descendants who drink

to his memory. Those who achieve this appreciation best glorify him most, and no one can do this like his brother poets. But this has not occurred to all the numerous gentlemen who come forward on this occasion. The only poet chosen to participate in these festivities (and he was not at the lunch) was Mr Drinkwater, and this choice perhaps condemns these celebrations more than if the poets were excluded altogether from such Philistine congregations. For Mr Drinkwater's Muse, ponderously earnest and apprehensively prim, is of all the most opposed to Byron's, who was an abandoned, reckless, and derisive young lady. Mr Drinkwater's Muse is indeed so nervous about her reputation that to protect herself she will not let Mr Drinkwater intoxicate us. He always wants to improve us. Yet we have one writer of talent, Mr Frankau, who has given us an early poem, "One of Us," which is Byronic both in form and spirit. There has been no mention of him, for he merely loves and understands Byron. But this idiosyncrasy is no merit in the eyes of Lord Ernle's two hundred and fifty guests, most of whom restrict their enthusiasm for literature to reading the daily papers, business columns first.

ANATOLE FRANCE

Anatole France ended his life as the most splendid luminary in the whole constellation of French letters. He was not only the greatest name of all his fellow-countrymen, but he was perhaps the greatest name in European literature. For though other authors, including some of our own, have been more widely read during the last generation, none has been more admired than he. No writer in Europe has ever handled his own language as Anatole France has handled French. Indeed, he wrote for the pleasure of using words, just as some painters have painted for the pleasure of using paint; in him the style was all. So almost every quality in him vanishes in translations, and to read him in any other tongue but his own is like reading Shakespeare's Sonnets in German. For this reason he has never attained the popularity Tolstoi, or our Mr Wells, or even Zola have enjoyed all over the civilised world: these do not seek, and sometimes even despise, mere beauty of language. They have other aims, and are no worse, and sometimes better, in another tongue. There is a faultless invariable grace, an effortless elegance, an unstudied facility in the prose of Anatole France which is inimitable, and so masterly

that it dazzles even those who are inexpert in and unfamiliar with French.

Great accomplishments exact a heavy price. It took him the half of a long lifetime to forge and temper this slight, glittering, and wonderful instrument. He had to content himself with a youth and a middle age that were poor and obscure and spent in the drudgery of trivial tasks executed for "rapacious publishers." If he had died at forty, he would have been almost unknown. His early years were almost sterile, producing little, and even that not very good. For poetry, which is all feeling, is the natural outlet of youth, which is all feeling too, and Anatole France was no poet. He was well aware of his deficiency, and in the curious conversations of his collected by Mr Gsell he has told us he first wrote his poems in prose and then put into verse, as if they were tasks. His first book, a volume of poems published when he was thirty, had no success, and does not deserve much. These compositions have a certain splendour of phrase, like all the poets of the school to which he adhered. But they are too much like gorgeous exercises, which in fact, and as we now know, they were.

He was no poet because he began life without any strong passions of the soul. He had none of the unreasonable and excessive sensibility that on the one hand makes poets behave in so foolish a fashion, on the other hand gives them a precocious capacity for experiencing life which makes their genius apparently miraculous. But prose is the form taken by reason and so reaches its highest

excellences when the fires of life have begun to slacken; Anatole France was well past middle age when his first masterpieces were given to the world.

He has, like so many French novelists, a limited horizon in actual life. For him there is hardly any existence but town existence, and hardly any town but Paris, and not much in Paris but the two circles of fashion and art which have always combined there for their mutual benefit as they do in no other capital, producing a high Society of polished and delicate brilliance, and an artistic culture that enjoys real national eminence carried to the point of idolatry.

From libraries and from this splendid but narrow life, Anatole France finds most of the stuff from which his books are made. Those of our own novelists who are his contemporaries, and who can bear comparison with him, Hardy and Kipling and Conrad, offer us a wider field to move in; they have mixed with men, and shared those efforts and endurances out of which art has always carved its very finest. They, and most of our best writers, have not confined themselves to libraries, however choice and rare their contents, or to high social circles, however exquisite their composition. Their experiences are not bounded by London, still less by London Society, which, with a few exceptions, remains, as it has always been, sturdily Philistine, and so deeply planted in country life that it is never quite at ease in the town life natural to real Latins. "Le monde," high Society, spreads in England no enchanting lure to absorb and distract

the artist, but continues to look upon him with slightly rustic suspicion and alarm, unless his literary talents can be put to practical parliamentary use. To take only the previous generation, its attention was far too closely fixed on Gladstone the politician and Fred Archer the jockey ever to be aware of George Meredith and Alfred Stevens. On the other hand, our artists, though deprived of the delicious and flattering sweets their brethren are offered in Paris and Rome, are by this very neglect allowed to go free, and to breathe a more open, a larger air. There are other things in life for them but books and amorous intrigue.

In Anatole France we breathe a highly artificial, though choice, atmosphere; but how little his contemporaries in this country can compete with him in technical skill; here, certainly, he surpasses our very greatest. Thomas Hardy, it is true, hardly reaches out for this merit; he follows the track of his subject with too deep an intent to be anything but indifferent to his own not infrequent slovenliness. Dazzling as the effects are which Conrad seeks and attains, yet he always remains a foreigner using a foreign tongue; he is often unsure whether he has hit the bull's eye, and often has a second, and even a third shot at it; he himself said using English was like "trying to hit a mosquito with a forty-foot stock-whip." Kipling has a giant's strength; but he uses it like a giant, and the immensity of the effort is often unconcealed. But Anatole France leaves us constantly astonished, wondering how he acquired those qualities he mentions in one of his volumes of autobiography

as being those he esteems most of all; "the careless ease and smoothness, the unstrained simplicity of nature." No search; no effort; and yet he transforms and transmutes everything he touches, even the commonest things. Where did he learn his secret?

He despised learning, and in his youth he failed in his examination for a degree in the University of Paris. He defined a *savant* as a man "who spends his whole life studying and collecting things that are totally wanting in interest." But he was nevertheless immensely learned, though in the right way, unversed in and indifferent to the minute, miscellaneous information which is the stock-in-trade of erudition, but entranced by that imaginative beauty which is the endowment of great writers, and to which the learned men who expound them are often quite blind, remaining, as he himself puts it, "crammed with humane letters, and quite illiterate."[1] In the exquisite volumes of autobiography which were almost the last things he wrote he has described the little boy who sat dreaming over the classics of his own country and of antiquity, while he remained bottom of the class. It was from them he learnt his secret. Voluptuary as he was, they were the real and permanent passions of his life. Of the Greeks he says in these last volumes: "I owe them all, and I wished I owed them more, for everything reasonable that we know about the universe and man comes from them." He never moved without a

[1] "Bourré de lettres, mais illetré"; of the head of M. Bergeret's University in "l'Histoire Contemporaine."

Virgil in his pocket, and he put the verses of Racine among the three wonders of the world, comparable, in their unapproachable perfection, to classical Greek sculpture. It was perhaps from this poet that he gained his style; for Racine's words also float and flutter with the same winged lightness, and settle into phrases like soft, clustering doves.

But he is not a spiritual descendant of that sage and serious poet. He is a comic writer. He takes up the torch, sparklingly bright, handed down by the great French comic writers, the like of whom, for all the wealth of our literature, we do not possess. For though we have some noble humorists, our view of life is grave; it is a serious affair, and only rarely a matter of enjoyment. In particular there is only a small number of things we will allow ourselves to laugh over, for laughter is a form of enjoyment, its most spiritual and most delicate form. But there is nothing in Heaven or Earth at which these French comic writers, from Rabelais on, have not aimed their gaiety; nothing is too holy or too intimate. So to us they must seem irreverent or improper, symptoms and causes of immorality. It is therefore easy to misunderstand them.

The quarrel between Art and Morals must be as old as they are, and only those who are unthinking can hope to end it: one or the other must always try to ride first. Art in itself is no more moral or immoral than science; and, strictly speaking, a picture can no more be immoral than a chemical experiment. Both may have demoralis-

ing consequences; the picture may suggest sinful thoughts, and the experiment may furnish a murderer with a new poison. But in neither case is the effort of production either moral or immoral. Science has often clashed with morals, but not so constantly as art. For science draws us away from that circle of feeling in the soul where morals and art are both busy; that, indeed, is the function and merit of science. But morals and art remain in that circle, and are always bumping against each other. Morals cares only for right feeling, and upbraids art for expressing all feelings indiscriminately, and so often tripping the soul: it accuses art of making men more animal. But art retorts exactly the same charge. It blames morals for checking that expression of the soul which is its primary, strongest, and most constant activity, and of thus stunting and weakening it in its struggle with animal instincts. A balance must be kept between their claims; for if either sits on the other and crushes it, we are bound to suffer.

But, being human and therefore never perfectly right, we must incline to one exaggeration or the other. It has always been the case; not to go outside this island and these latter days, we swung from one extreme to another about three centuries ago. Shakespeare and the text of the Bible, in all their beauty and impropriety, remain to remind how we once talked. But about the time they were written we went off to the other extreme. Since then we have been far too apprehensive, and inclined to treat laughter and all else that is agreeable in the universe as dangerous to the

soul, and a bait of the Devil. Quite lately the Scots treated public laughter as public indecency and punished it by law.[1] This nervousness is, of course, a homage, and a very sincere homage, paid to the Devil. It is an exaggeration which has occurred so often, that theologians have had to find a name for it, Manichæism, calling it after an early Christian thinker in the East, whose followers still survive. This gentleman argued, very logically, that if the Devil is paramount and pervading (as he must be if all pleasure proceeds from him) it is wiser to adore him, rather than the Almighty. In the history of Christian thought from the very outset this heresy in various forms is always cropping up. This Devil-worship forms a large part of Puritanism. It vexes us, but it ravages America; so that thousands of leisured Americans, overcome by the triviality and dulness of life in their own country, leave it as a prison, and settle where it has not been forbidden for generations to use the mind for the purpose of pleasure and amusement.

Now there is a deep gulf fixed between Latins and Northerners; the Latins have been Latin, and their ancestors worshipped joyous but often gross gods, like Pan and Priapus; in spite of conversion the old paganism in those lands still persists underneath, so that, by a strange paradox, it is still strongest near Rome, that very Rome which sent out its saints to convert the north, including this island. Northerners, however, have never been saturated by that old pagan Latin culture, but

[1] See Keats' Letters.

passed straight from heathendom into Christianity; for that reason they are inclined to become Manichæan. This difference in origin accounts for almost all other differences, and especially the one denoted by calling the one Protestant and the other Catholic.

By reason of their origin Latin races will never give up a pagan joy of life, of which freedom of expression forms so large a part; indeed it is the only way the mind, as distinguished from the body, can enjoy itself. But this spiritual licence seems worse to us than actual physical vice. Northerners maintain an earnest ethical zeal, of which restraint of expression forms a large part; for, if we say nothing, we can hardly communicate or inflict evil. But this guarded reticence seems to the Latins to be, not a moral quality, but mere hypocrisy. Though each at times may vary from this attitude, the past, the distant, obscure, unconscious but mastering and ruling past, always reasserts itself. The difference is present in the very oldest folk-music. The old Tuscan peasant airs ring with gaiety; the old German Lieder are solemn in their loveliness. It is not less so in the very latest art of the music-hall and the bookstall. In Paris this art tends to be vulgar and indecent, because it deals with, and therefore suggests, wrongful experiences. In London it tends to be silly and childishly inane, because it excludes and ignores so much actual experience.

The Puritan in art often annoys us, but he is not often criticised on just grounds. He is spiritually unsporting, just as some people are physically

unsporting; they decline to take chances, and forgo the benefits of football and hunting for fears of bruises and broken ribs. To safeguard the soul the Puritan enfeebles it, thus frustrating his own purpose, and making man not better (as he intends) but only more decorous. Under his influence we have renounced the free play of the mind for fear of offence. Our conversation, which is as much an art as architecture, shows this constraint most clearly. We suffer from self-conscious timidity, religious in origin but now ingrained, so that our constant reliance on one or two topics, like the weather or the Government, make it a marvel to all other people. Consequently, too, our literature is deficient in comedy and wit. We are too apprehensive to laugh at what may be wrong, or play with dangerous things like words. Though we have some admirable humorists, they have been far too checked and confined ever to rise to the heights they might have reached elsewhere; if Mark Twain had been born on the banks of the Seine instead of the Mississippi, he might have been a genius. Our fun, though wholesome and delicious, as in the "Pickwick Papers," is both shallow and narrow. There is no range or depth in it. The French, though practising every art with zeal, excel perhaps in none but comedy, and their comic writers have no equals. Patriotic prejudice may repudiate it but our actions acknowledge it; for we borrow and deform their comedies in sheaves, and they ignore ours. No one else has a Molière and his urbane laugh which goes to the very heart of life. But it is easy for us, coming

from our serious atmosphere, to be misled about their comic authors. We are like foreigners at a football match; they are so astonished at the brutality of the charging and tackling, and so horrified by the bruises and black eyes which may result, that they cannot appreciate the game at all. We also are too astonished by the licence of thought and language, and too horrified at the sin and wickedness they may cause, to appreciate Rabelais, Molière, La Fontaine, and Voltaire. Our professed libertines and professional purists, who have great affinities, are equally wanting in correct appreciation. Both of them fix their attention on the same thing, the one in relish, the other in reprobation. But the interest of these French comic writers is very different, and very great, and it is worth while considering what it is.

Anatole France is one of this great line. He was also an ardent and admiring student of them all; he may even surpass them. There is so dazzling a flame of comic invention in some of his books, like the Amethyst Ring, that it is perhaps not presumptuous to compare Anatole France to him who in the bright and exhilarating heaven of laughter will ever be peerless and supreme, Aristophanes. But Anatole France is not only one of them; in the course of the conversations already referred to, he happens to have told us what he thinks their secret to be.

Discussing how superior differ from inferior authors, he rejects the view that they write better; he thinks most of the best write badly, and even ungrammatically. Little of them, he declares, is

original; they all borrow extensively from others. He finds their secret in another quality. "They are noble," he says, "they feel for man; they pity him, and that is the secret of their greatness," and that is also the charm of Anatole France and of his comic forerunners.

For tragedy and comedy treat the same things, only differently; so much so that it is quite easy for them to exchange parts. There have been some ribald minds to whom King Lear was funny, and his misfortunes farcical; and there are no doubt many kind and simple creatures who are sorry for Charlie Chaplin, and drop a tear over his sufferings. Both tragedy and comedy perform the same function, though in a different way, the one with tears and the other with laughter. They teach us how to liberate ourselves from the oppression caused by our emotions. One of the greatest of thinkers on all subjects, but who was pre-eminently a physiologist, told his pupils tragedy was a sort of purgative;[1] it clears the human spirit of much that chokes and inflames and poisons it. Comedy is a purgative too, but more palatable. Every person, struck by some deep annoyance, has felt uncertain whether to cry or laugh over it; he is hesitating between the tragic and the comic view; and a great many people who are by no means philosophical have thought a sense of humour is a blessing in misfortune. Comic writers, even the humblest, fortify this power of the mind, arming us to meet the follies and misfortunes of life. So far, therefore, from being, as dullards generally

[1] Κάθαρσις. Aristotle in the Poetics.

suppose, trivial people, useful only to fill an idle moment, they are to be numbered among the chiefest benefactors of man, and far more so than many of the professed moralists who wish to be benefactors but remain only bores. But we lose all these benefits if we listen to the Puritan's apprehensions though these are not groundless. Yet in helping us to bear human ills, these writers suffer themselves from being too acutely perceptive of them. They suffer from their own humanity, and break their shins over their own wit. French literature, striking as it does almost every chord in the scale of laughter, is at bottom pessimistic; in it the universe seems out of joint. Ours, grave and rarely smiling, like ourselves, is yet fundamentally cheerful, and has a sober confidence that life is worth living.

Anatole France is like his forerunners. He has amused the world better than anyone of his generation, but he is deceptive. For he is an ironist, saying one thing and meaning another, like many subtle and distinguished minds. In one of his works he declares that man should be given two judges, Pity and Irony: pity to compassionate his fate on earth, and irony to laugh at it. His own ironical mockery, which ranges over everything in life, is thus only a mask for deep sensitiveness and sadness, and, like all the chosen favourites of the comic spirit, he laughs at the world to prevent himself crying over it.

THE TRIUMPH OF DR MARIE STOPES

Dr Marie Stopes has attained the only form of immortality of which anyone can be certain in this country : she has given her name to a leading case. Her name will be repeated for generations by an audience, fit though few, in the Temple and the Strand. The case itself arose out of a libel in which she was accused of disturbing the morals of the poor. By bringing it she certainly has disturbed the law of libel, for the question of birth control, to which the libel referred, acted like a red herring on the Law Lords in the House of Lords, and drew the whole pack in full cry after it and away from the subjects of justification and fair comment which they were supposed to be pursuing. The Lord Chancellor spoke as if millions of women were hanging on his words, and ready to plunge into the horrors of contraception if he found for Dr Stopes ; most of the pack went after him, and she lost her case. But Lord Wrenbury, who dissented from his brethren, blew a long blast in favour of birth control in his dissenting judgment before he referred to the legal aspects of the case at all. Justification and contraception have become inextricably interwoven, and years may elapse before the legal profession can disentangle them.

Dr Stopes has written three books on sexual questions, *Married Love*, *Wise Parenthood* and *Radiant Motherhood*. But only the first one, *Married Love*, really counts; the others are pale imitations prompted largely by the success of the first, which was huge. Nearly half a million copies were sold in English, and therefore it can compete with the great book successes of this generation, like the *Rosary* of Mrs Barclay. For Dr Stopes hit upon the recipe which always tickles the taste of our public more than any other, and which can be best described as a mixture of sensuality and moral zeal. Indeed, there are many points in common between Mrs Barclay and Dr Stopes—Mrs Barclay had moved in religious circles and wrote fiction; Dr Stopes in scientific, and writes technical works. But in one and the other mankind appears to be the same, full of gross appetites and ideal views. In the paradise of Mrs Barclay the blessed are full of self-sacrifice and are rewarded by luxury and titles; and in Dr Stopes' earthly heaven the happy residents uplift both the universe, society and the individuals by transports of sexual indulgence. Intercourse admits to the "higher potentialities and relationships with the eternal."[1] Both authors satisfy at the same time the lower nature of the average sensual woman and her wish for higher things. Nearly all best sellers conform to this formula, and for that reason their authors are nearly all average respectable women.

Dr Stopes undertook what certainly no one else has ever tried in English, to write on the "Art of

[1] *Married Love, 16th Edition*, p. 103.

Love." She herself says so.[1] But it was to be "reverend." Unusual, and even unique, as this enterprise may have been, it must be judged for what it intends to be, if it is to be judged at all. There are Pagan arts of love in which experienced satyrs have told us how nymphs can best be caught; and in the orgiastic religions of the East there are works with which Dr Stopes is evidently familiar, and which when giving the youthful female advice how to incite the male are almost as humourless and dull as she is. But we certainly have not, and probably no other country has, works of this kind that are "reverend." So her object is definite but limited. She wishes to help "married women who get no satisfaction from physical union with their husbands."[2] She intends to give "knowledge" to the male how to "rouse charm and stimulate"[3] the female. But he and she must be married otherwise the knowledge would not be reverend.

Yet such knowledge must be got from somewhere before it can be imparted to others. Dr Stopes has acquired it by learning philosophy in Munich and science in London, and by a study of the cretaceous flora. It is here apparently that the secrets of amorous dalliance are to be found; and, as it might be expected, the main secret is found by her to be in a law, the "law of periodicity of recurrence." A chart explains it. Armed with this diagram, man can melt any heart. The other sources of Dr Stopes' knowledge are the confidences of unsatisfied wives; yet they cannot tell,

[1] *Married Love*, 16*th Edition*, p. 16. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 91. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

or they would not be unsatisfied. Dr Stopes' knowledge is all hearsay, and unreliable hearsay. She has the greatest contempt for "flighty young women," as she calls them, "empty-headed and ridiculously-dressed creatures," "preposterously corseted dolls"[1]; but any of them might have told her "the key" with which a husband can "unlock the electric force in his wife."[2]

Insufficient data give false conclusions. Dr Stopes has acquired a view of man that is not correct. "In the majority of men desire," she says, "even if held in stern check, is merely slumbering. It is always present, ever ready to wake at the lightest call, and often so spontaneously insistent as to require perpetual conscious repression."[3] No doubt this describes a great many of them; but not all. Dr Stopes' observations have been confined to an inferior type. That is the real cause of the evil she wishes to remove. If her patients' husbands were not repulsive, her advice would be superfluous; being as they are, it is useless.

Here no doubt, too, lies the secret of her great success, for she produces, in a pseudo-scientific way, what Ethel M. Dell and her peers produce in a semi-imaginative way, a world where men, inflamed with burning physical passion, rage madly round cold and icily virtuous women. Marriage, precedent or ultimate, is supposed to purify this view of the world of all coarseness; and thus people who are very animal, and yet would like

[1] *Married Love*, p. 92. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

to be quite otherwise, can enjoy themselves without offending their conscience.

Married Love fails in what it intends to do, to give us a new "Art of Love," like Ovid's, only in this case legitimate love. Its commercial success is immense because it gives its readers without any decorum the same impressions that other writers, invariably respectable middle-class ladies, give in fiction with the utmost propriety of scene and speech. But it is this very absence of decorum that makes it a portent.

The language of *Married Love* is crude, but it would be fanciful to consider it can do much harm. Reference towards the sexual appetite can hardly alter its total volume very much, any more than reference to eating and drinking can very much alter the total amount of food consumed. Nature makes both these appetites too strong, and, though they can be curbed, it is not by keeping them unmentioned. Many people think so about sex, but they are hardly more enlightened than savages who use taboos and think that the rain can be stopped by taking care not to speak of it.

Yet this work has been written by an evidently irreproachable woman for a highly prudish public. It has brought wealth to its author, and has been acclaimed by this very public. This is portentous, but not inexplicable.

Nature is uncompromising about nutrition and reproduction; at all costs it will always maintain these instincts in full force. Their pleasures are overruling, and can be injurious. Both can be discussed in terms of propriety or terms of impro-

priety. But the modern world, and England more than any other country, talks about each of them in a very different fashion; and we have determined not to refer to one of them at all, and, if we do, only in a very unnatural way. It is possible to discuss nutrition and digestion in the foulest terms, as some do; but most well-behaved people speak of them in an inoffensive language. Yet the inoffensive language only exists because well-behaved people use it; they, in fact, create it. On the other hand, by our rules of living, the same people have been forbidden to speak about sex as sincerely as they do about eating. Consequently, no really decent language exists in which to discuss it.

On this island only the navvy and the doctor speak about sex in genuine accents, and consequently, if we wish to talk about it, our choice is between the language of the gutter and that of the consulting room. Well-bred people, therefore, cannot discuss it even if they would. By declining to do so they have lost the power; so that they must pretend that things, of which every one is well aware, do not exist at all.

If behind this reticence there existed a real indifference, we should indeed have reached a lofty and austere level of life; for we would have mastered and crushed our strongest animal instincts. But there is nothing our public, and especially our female public, care about more: at least four-fifths of the popular art in which it finds satisfaction, films, plays, novels, magazines, deal with the relations of the sexes, lawful or illicit.

Our moral prohibitions checking its creators from expressing what they really feel, this art, too, like our decent ordinary language, is invariably conventional and false.

Most of it that is successful satisfies two quite contradictory demands. It must be sexual or otherwise it would not gratify a profound and real, if unavowed, inclination; and yet it must be pure and refrain from mentioning evil, or it would not conform to our rules of life. This contradiction runs through all the popular art, of which the chief patroness is the average woman: through the films with their scenes of nudity and dissipation, always carefully balanced by consequent misery and punishment, and their stories of irresistible temptation no less invariably overcome; through stage plays, where irregularities are by far the most constant theme, and where sexual offences are always about to be, but never are committed, so that we can take a long and palpitating look over the brink of the abyss and yet all is well because few or none ever go over it; through novels and magazines where burns a steady fire of voluptuous desire, but which are treated as innocent because no consummation is supposed to take place. While all may be suggested without scruple, even seduction, adultery, and rape, public morals remain uninjured and unendangered as long as the fact is avoided and its existence is virtually denied. The public, and the police still more, insist on this proviso. We thus flatter ourselves (to use the precise plainness of our ancient tongue) that lust ceases to be itself by having solemn falsehoods

tacked on to it, and that vice loses half its evil by being thoroughly mixed with insincerity. No one doubts that by these pretences we have made our world safe for purity. In this fashion the average man or woman can swim and revel in seas of sensual emotion, and yet remain assured that at the end of the voyage he will find himself on the safe shore of domestic respectability.

The effect of this contradiction on the immense literature of love is curious. Its most successful purveyors are ladies who are either formally spinsters and unmistakably virgins, or matrons born and bred in or near the atmosphere of an Anglican vicarage. It is chiefly from them that we learn about the ardours and raptures of passion, whether lawful or not. This is inevitable, as long as the reading public are far more absorbed in sex than in any other subject, and yet insist on a strictly conventional treatment of it. Only these good women can satisfy this double demand. They alone can supply the conventional treatment of passion, for they alone have little or no experience of it. Nearly every one else is debarred from supplying reading matter to the home by having some real knowledge of the subject. It is from this class, therefore, female and blameless, that gush those familiar floods of printed matter with what is called a strong love interest. They pour without cessation over bookshop and bookstall. From their pens, too, come the majority of best sellers, of those works, idolised if ephemeral, that ring and echo in a million feminine hearts.

What is true of England is still more true of America where the level of culture is still lower and the standard of propriety still higher. Poetry is the quintessence of literature, its highest, purest, most intense form. In the States nearly all the patronage and production of it is left to unmarried and unmarriageable aunts. If sales are a measure of success, as they certainly are, the Sappho of our age is a most meritorious lady, Ella Wheeler Wilcox. This excellent woman was struggling to maintain dependent relations by her industry, when she found, by accident, that there was an insatiable demand for the luscious sentimental verse which she could pour forth without an effort. She took the opportunity, and never pretended any other object but to supply the necessities of life to those who were dear to her. She established her fame and her fortune with those "poems of passion" which in countless households have been read with more fervour than all the masterpieces of all the ages; yet in them she dealt with matters which had certainly never come into her narrow, arid, self-sacrificing existence.

Our popular art is one of apprehensive prudery veiling an interest in sex neither greater nor less than that of other people. It reflects a social life where strict decorum is firmly and gravely clamped on urgent physical appetites. It is these conditions that produce portents like *Married Love.*

For, sooner or later, some one, like Dr Stopes, gets hurt by the ignorance this false purity promotes, and by those ineradicable natural appetites which are supposed to be extirpated by treating

them as if they were not there, or as being something different. The sufferer determines there shall be light, and that the truth shall supplant make-believe. It was in the public interest, and without any purpose of profit, that Dr Stopes laid aside all decorum. But quite unintentionally, and no doubt much to her own surprise, she stumbled upon the sovereign recipe for the best seller—lashings of sensuality strongly flavoured with moral purpose. She outdid almost every rival. For, unimpeded by any rules of propriety, she could plunge deeper into sex questions than any of them. Also, she had a higher object. She, without doubt, intended *Married Love* to be a work of edification, a sort of tract.

Dr Marie Stopes has triumphed. She has ascended the same road of fame, paved with gold and crowded by a submissive multitude, where Mrs Henry Wood and Mrs Humphry Ward and Mrs Barclay and Ethel M. Dell and Berta Ruck and many a virtuous matron and many a simple spinster, have preceded her. Even if her sales are smaller, her triumph is greater. For these forerunners told us what we liked to know, but she has made us listen to what we did not want to hear. She by chance has found our weak spot, and holds us by a compelling grip. The savage has to submit to the medicine man or the conjurer because he is uncivilised, and for exactly the same reason we are bent to the will of Dr Stopes. Our popular art shows our weakness. The subject of sex stirs and attracts us as nothing else does, and yet we live in panic terror of ever breathing a true

word about it. This is not a very civilised state. If we were not still deeply gross and animal under our mask of severity, her book would have repelled rather than attracted us. If we were more habitually frank and sincere, and thus combined, as they can be combined, delicacy with candour, her book would have seemed to us rather dull and ridiculous.

MEMORIALS OF WAR

ἡ γὰρ τεκοῦσα τουσδε πατρὶς εὐτεκνος

EURIPIDES.

The Land that bore these men bears noble sons.

THIS volume,[1] as the title indicates, is the second in a series describing the part played by New Zealand in the Great War. It is compiled from official military records, and it has all their dry accuracy and matter-of-fact tone. The author, well aware of the drabness of his work, confesses it, and tries to excuse its want of colour in the preface. An unvarnished and unpretentious record of movements and engagements is certainly preferable to a cloud of false and inflated rhetoric. But such a record, being both unimaginative and unimpressive, is likely to fail in its very purpose, like most of the innumerable monuments, in stone or in writing, that have been erected to the combatants. It will not be read. The bulky tomes will no doubt find many pious purchasers, but their ultimate destiny is to repose undisturbed on the shelves of quiet libraries. But what our own and the New Zealand dead deserve is something more than a detailed and conscientious account; there is due to them something that

[1] "Official History of New Zealand's Effort in the Great War," Vol. II. France (Whitcombe & Tombs, Ltd., Wellington).

might move their descendants to all time, and so preserve and communicate their own noble spirit for ever. More is owed to the glorious dead than rubbish in print and stone. The very words everywhere inscribed to them, and which proclaim that their name will live for evermore, are delusive and derisive. For nearly all the objects bearing this oft-repeated inscription are too ugly to be anything but ephemeral, and will be swept away in a few generations.

Most of the soldiers who fought against the Germans fought for their own country on their own soil. They were threatened, not only with ultimate defeat and subjection, but immediate outrage and ruin. Both Frenchmen and Italians guessed or knew the atrocities that took place behind the wave of German invasion as it advanced. The fiercest incentive to fight that can be applied to the mind of human beings was applied to them, and all, without exception, knew that the final failure of their armies would end the history of their countries, which would be reduced to subjects or satellites of the German races. Our own troops never suffered from an invasion of their own soil, nor were they maddened by cruelties inflicted on those that were dear to them. But the countries ravaged by the Germans were next to their own. Their turn might come next. The enemy needed but little further success to reach our own island, and we also would have known that Prussian brutes were outraging defenceless women in Kentish villages, and drunken Bavarians roasting old women to death for fun. A singular and ex-

ceptional system of atrocity had been reserved for us by the German leaders, who proclaimed their intentions as soon as we entered the war, and who held it out to their troops as a special reward.

And even if we had not been given the spectacle of German ferocity, or had imagination to conceive it, or perhaps even belief in its existence, we knew without doubt, and without the frequent declarations that the Germans made to the whole world, that if we gave way we would be deprived of our wealth and our dominions, and that certainly unendurable poverty, and probably actual starvation, would have overtaken the great industrial population accumulated within the narrow limits of this island.

The war offered no threat to the New Zealanders in their distant isle. But for the telegraph it might easily have been fought out and concluded before even they had heard of its outbreak. Had they abstained altogether, and, lost in their waste of waters, remained indifferent to its course and its result, their soil would never have been touched by the enemy, whatever defeats the Allied armies suffered. It is likely, or is at least a calculable chance, that the triumph of the Germans and the dissolution of our Empire would not have affected them at all, but that they would have sailed away, unmolested and independent, out of the elaborate system of our Empire, to move in a political orbit of their own. They could obtain no material advantage, either from fighting or victory; on the contrary, they could anticipate, like all the other combatants, that this war, unlike most previous

wars, would leave those who won almost as impoverished as those who lost. Thus, on calculation, if they had made it, they stood to gain nothing in any event.

But there was no refusal, or even hesitation, to fight in Europe. If their coast had been contiguous to our own, instead of being separated by thousands of miles, their adhesion could not have been more immediate. This impulse was not of a few men, choice spirits elate at the prospect of any adventure, or of a small class, cultured enough to understand the issues of a struggle in another continent, but the impulse of a whole people, most of whom were ordinary men, busy with the ordinary cares of life, probably ignorant of where the battles were taking place, and certainly ignorant of the origin of the conflict.

The Allies, like the enemy, continued to repeat that their cause was that of Truth and Justice; but these high abstractions are not likely to have been the motives impelling these antipodean shepherds, squatters, or plain business men, to risk or sacrifice their lives. They did so naturally, without any consciousness of sacrifice or exceptional virtue, from love of England, which most of them had never touched or seen, and which can only have been a name and an idea to them. They did so, because their own country, which faces ours on the other side of the globe, seemed to them not only another England, an offspring and a copy, but still part of it, however remote, where they could enjoy more amply and freely what Englishmen love to enjoy in their own country; in-

stitutions, aiming at equality and granting every man a voice in the government of the country, and which they had established in a more perfect and uncompromising form than had ever been possible over here; an open air life of sport and athletics, accessible to almost all in a country uncrowded by industrial masses, and enjoyable in a far greater beauty of scenery and a far greater variety of climate, running through every degree from almost tropic heat to the almost arctic cold of their farthest south; and means of living more easy and abundant in a country only beginning to yield its natural wealth, where the pressure of population has not begun to make intense and ruthless the struggle for life, as it has long done over here.

Patriotism is the supreme virtue in our time, and, even if it often runs into excess, yet more than anything else now existing it draws forth the highest qualities of man. The war was made illustrious by great feats of devotion and courage on both sides, and it is mere vanity to believe that they were exclusively, or perhaps even specially, to be found with us. But we may justly claim that the flame of patriotism nowhere burnt with a more pure and splendid flame than in those Australian and New Zealand armies, in which their whole manhood was enlisted, and who came half-way round the globe, without any fear of loss or prospect of gain, to fight for us in countries so distant that even the stars were unseen before and new to them, and to die for us obscurely in places the very names of which remained unknown to them.

Their dead, therefore, deserve, not masses of meaningless dulness like this book, but something like these epitaphs the Greeks composed for their dead warriors, and which still stir us after a lapse of two thousand years; something such as only the Greeks have ever been able to write, where immeasurable depth of feeling is married by consummate art to unsurpassable simplicity, brevity, and dignity, and which would have thrilled and inflamed the descendants of these New Zealand armies for generation after generation.

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